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How to Make CUSHIONS Pillows and Bolsters

Instructions for

- Making Forms
- Trims
- Puffed Box
- Sunburst
- Tufting
- Picture Frame
- Flange Edge
- Bolsters—
  All Shapes

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How to Make CUSHIONS Pillows and Bolsters

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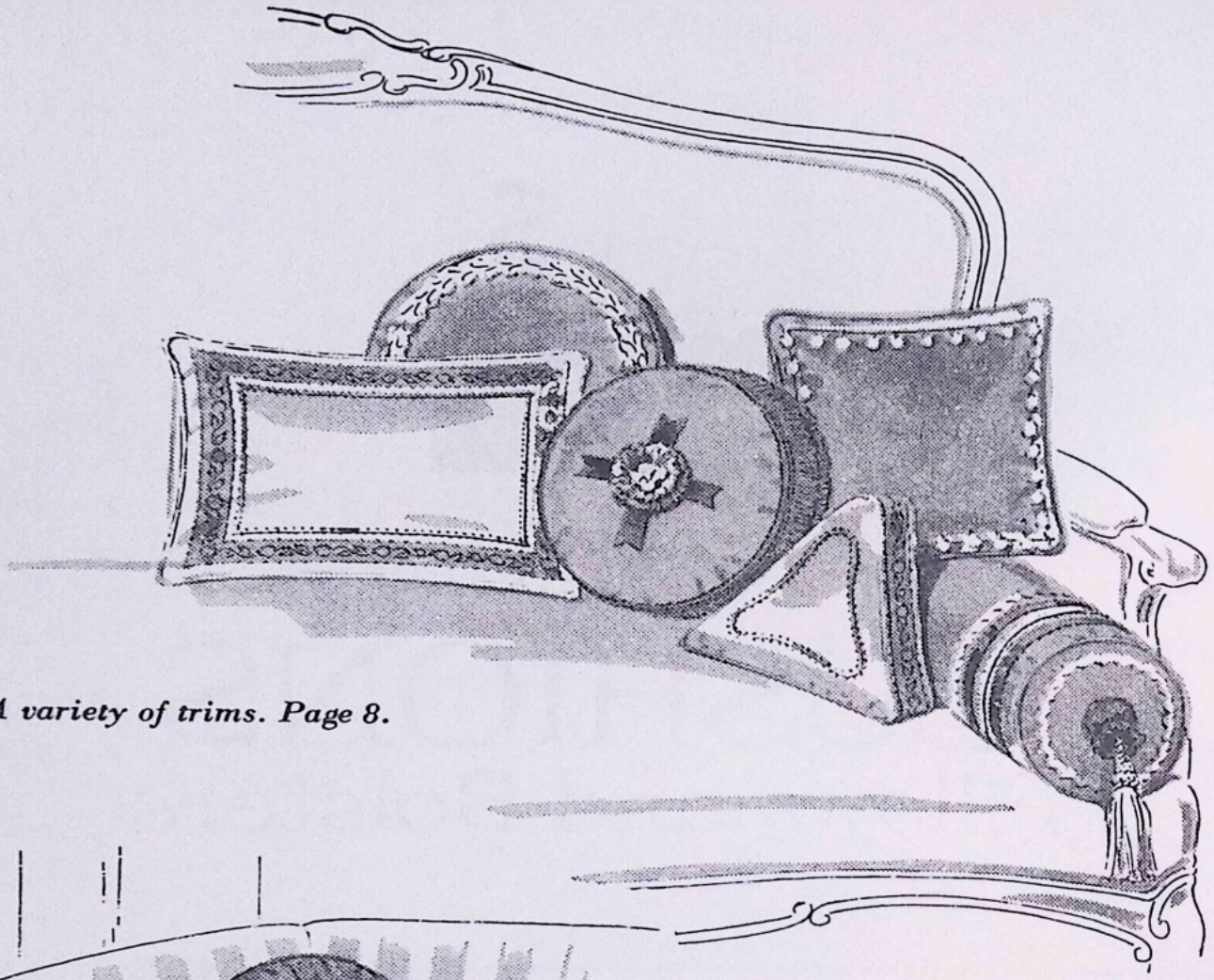
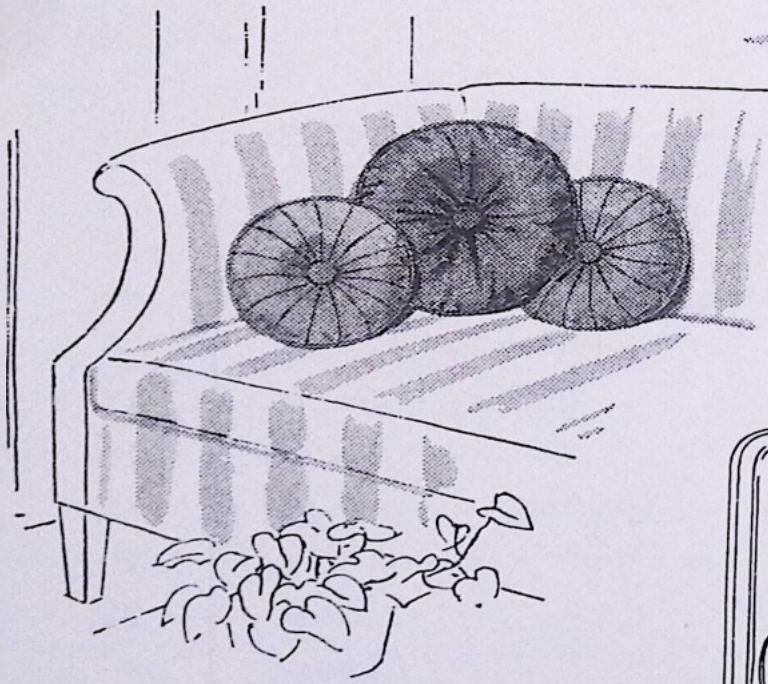
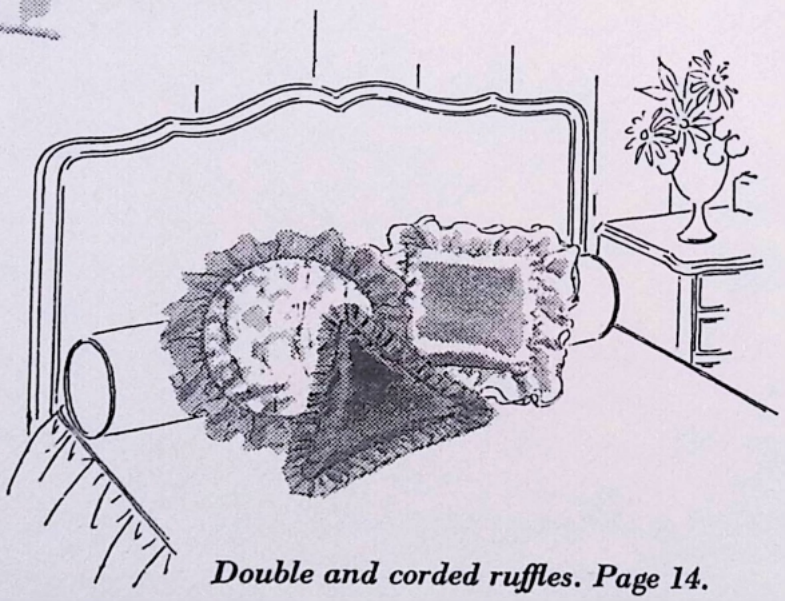


A variety of trims. Page 8.



Sunburst designs. Page 16.



Double and corded ruffles. Page 14.

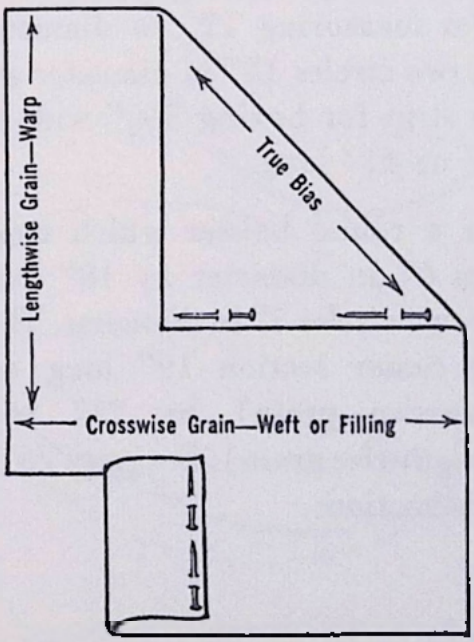
Fabrics

There are few accessories that fill the need for a spot of color or lend a feeling of comfort and luxury in the home as do cushions, pillows and bolsters. They are used in many sizes, shapes and varying types. Stacks of big square or round cushions are used on the floor while groupings of two or more smaller ones are used on the sofa, couch or bed.

Cushions, pillows and bolsters are easy-to-make. When you make your own you have the pleasure of choosing the fabric and color that compliments, accents or harmonizes with the decor of the room as well as adding the personal touch.

The fabrics used should be in keeping with other fabric furnishings, both in quality and texture. You have a wide choice for every room. For example: antique taffeta, brocade, linen, chintz, cotton velvet, velveteen, taffeta, damasks, ticking, moires and many of the synthetic blends may be used in the living room. For the bedroom the choice may be chintz, taffeta, damasks, linen, a novelty cotton or synthetic blend. But for the den, family room or terrace, denim, sailcloth, chintz, corduroy, cotton satin, ginghams, drill, ticking, other closely woven cottons and synthetics would be a practical choice.

Covers for cushions, pillows and bolsters are usually cut on the true lengthwise and crosswise grain of the fabric. However, the fabric may be cut on the bias when using plaids, stripes, or combining two fabrics to create interesting designs. Also when bias is used for ruffles, bands and pleated or gathered sunburst designs.



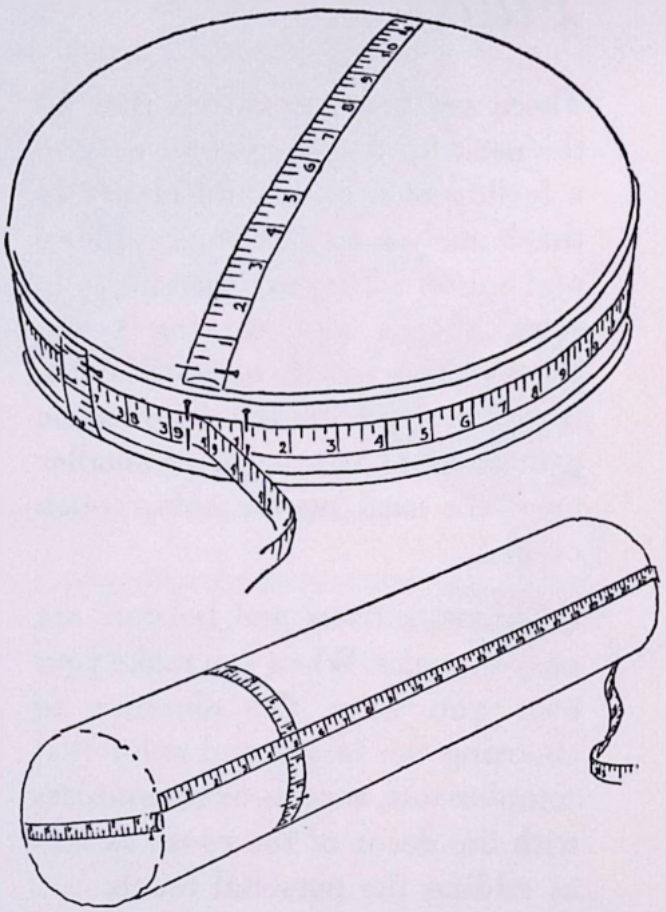
Forms for Cushions, Pillows and Bolsters

These forms are available ready-made in a variety of shapes, sizes and materials. Those made of foam rubber are either molded or cut to shape and size. Some are made of shredded foam rubber, kapok or other lightweight material with a muslin cover.

When using a foam rubber form best results are obtained when it is first covered with a good quality of muslin. Measure the form for the width, length, depth of boxing and the circumference. To all measurements add 1″ for seams.

For example: If a square form measures 12″ x 12″ x 2½″, cut two pieces of muslin 13″ x 13″ and a strip for boxing (lengthwise grain) 3½″ wide by 49″ long. For a round form measuring 12″ in diameter, cut two circles 13″ in diameter and the strip for boxing 3½″ wide by 40″ or 41″ long.

For a round bolster which measures 6″ in diameter by 18″ long, cut two circles 7″ in diameter. Then cut center section 19″ long (on crosswise grain) by 21″ wide (lengthwise grain). See page 26 for construction.



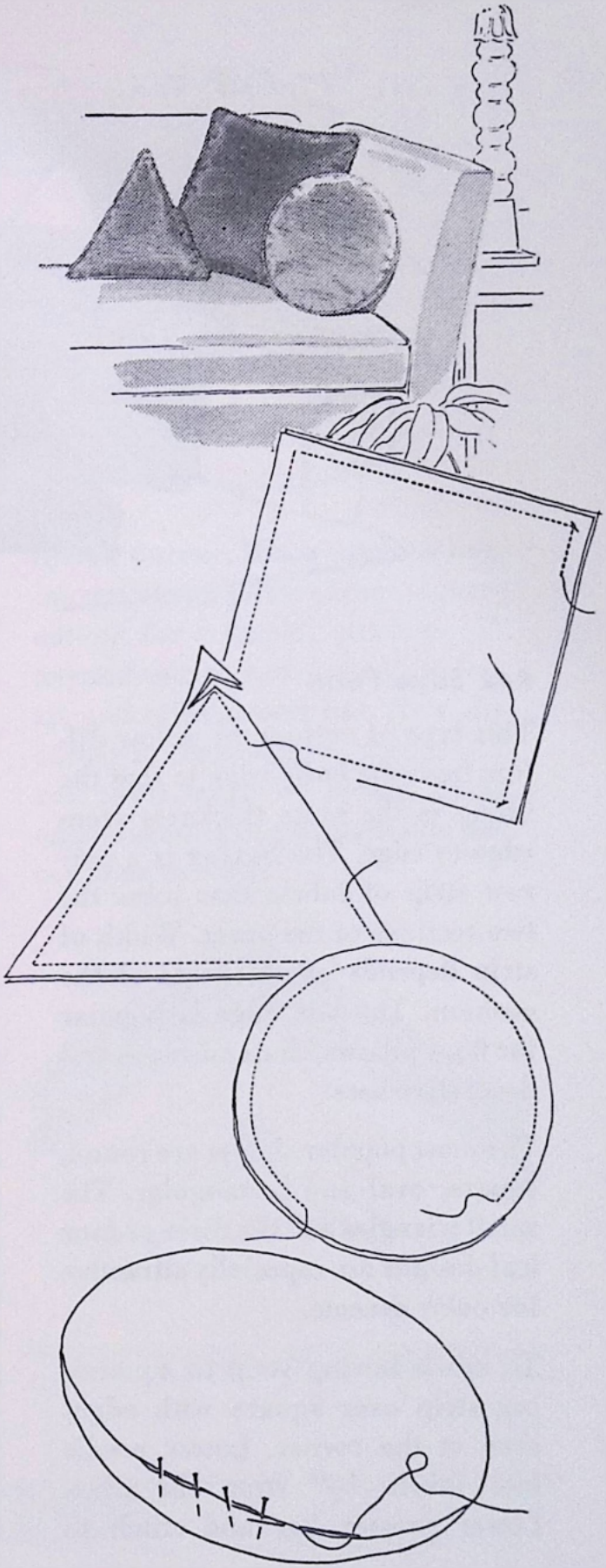
When making your own forms, first decide on the type—that is, a form with a knife edge or a box edge. Then decide on the shape and size. While these are the two basic types of forms for cushions, they may be made in many sizes and shapes. Either type can be made round, square, oblong, rectangular, triangular, oval, crescent, octagon, leaf or flower shaped.

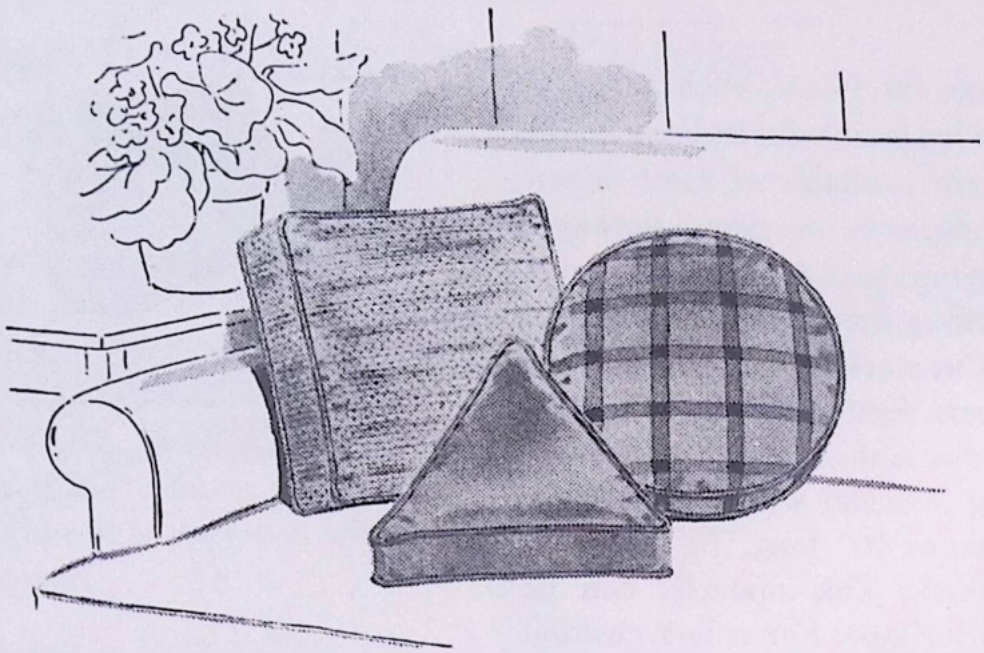
Fillings for forms, such as kapok, shredded foam rubber, Dacron fiber etc., are available at most department stores in one pound packages. Old nylon stockings make an excellent filling that is smooth and resilient. Cut stockings in tiny bits and fill form firmly but do not pack. Also available is a cellulose cushioning material which comes in a roll about 66″ long, 16″ wide by ¾″ thick. This material can be cut any shape. For a box cushion use as many layers as necessary for desired thickness. Four squares, 16″ x 16″, may be cut from one roll.

Knife Edge Form

This is an easy form to make and perhaps the most popular of the decorator cushions.

Cut two pieces of muslin for cover, the size and shape desired, and add 1″ for seams. Pin the two pieces, right sides together, matching grain lines. Stitch ½″ from the edge leaving a 6″ opening for turning and filling. Press. Trim all angular points as shown in triangle illustration. Turn case to the right side and fill with kapok, shredded foam rubber or other filling. Turn edges of opening to inside and pin. Machine-stitch on edge, or whip edges together by hand.





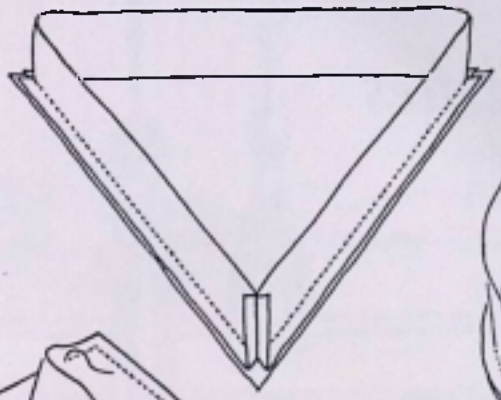
Box Edge Form

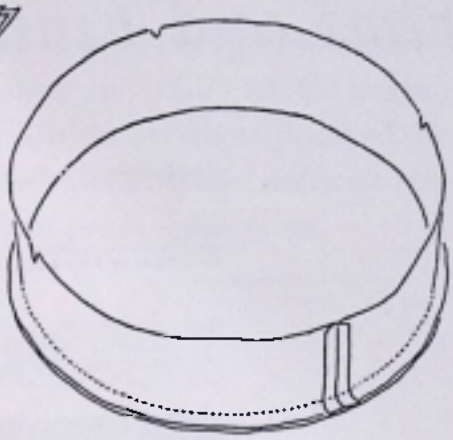
This type of cushion or pillow differs from the knife edge in that the filling is the same thickness from edge to edge. The boxing is a narrow strip of fabric that joins the two sections of the cover. Width of strip depends on thickness of the cushion. The box edge is popular for floor pillows, chair cushions and decorative uses.

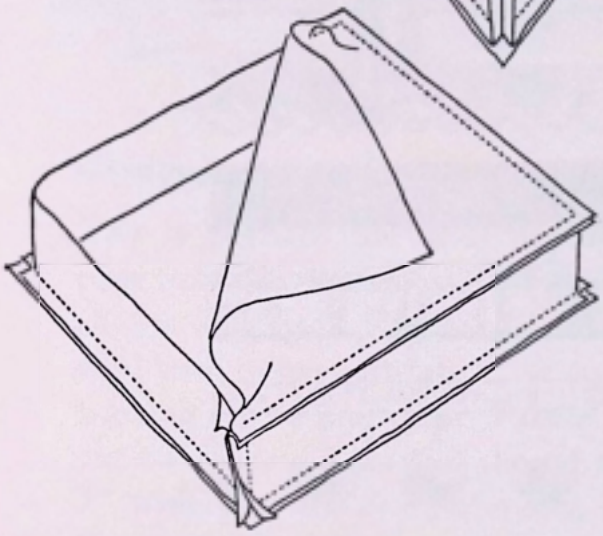
The most popular shapes are round, square, oval and rectangular. The small triangles and the three or four leaf designs are especially attractive for color accents.

To stitch boxing strip to squares, pin strip over square with edges even at the corner. Lower needle into fabric ½″ from the edge. Lower presser bar and stitch to ½″ of next corner. Raise presser bar and clip edge of strip to needle. Pivot fabric on needle at an angle and take one stitch diagonally across end of slash; then complete the turn. With fabric smooth and edges even continue stitching around the square to starting point, pivoting at each corner in the same way. Stitch ends of strip together. Leave one side open when joining second square for inserting foam rubber form or other filling. Whip edges of opening together by hand.

When stitching boxing strip and circle or oval together, place strip next to feed with circle or oval over strip. Start stitching ½″ from end of strip. Keep edge of strip straight with the presser foot and guide curved edge in front of needle, keeping edges of fabric together.



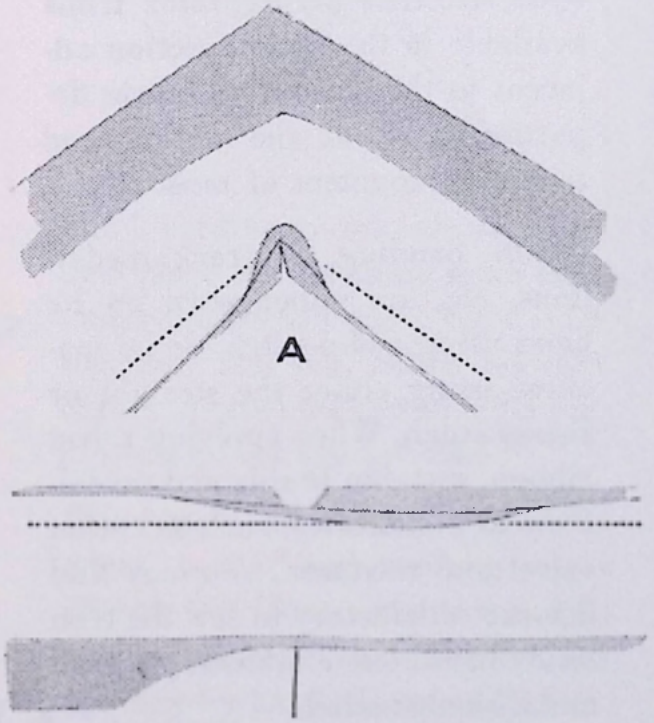




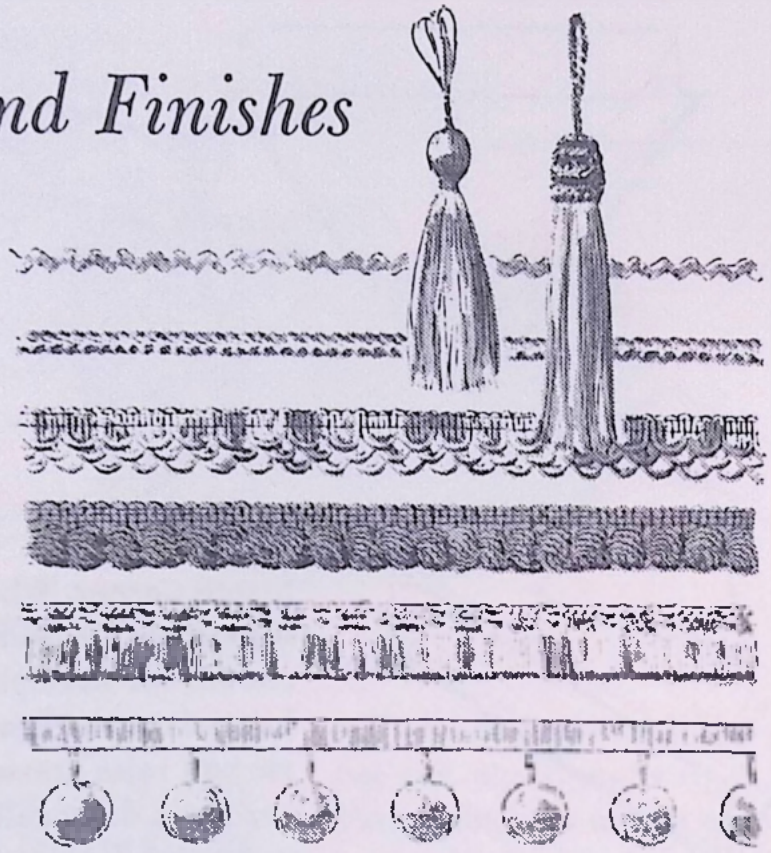
When making a triangular box form with three equal sides, draw an outline on paper the size of the finished form desired. Then draw another line ½" (the seam allowance) outside of first line. Cut pattern on this line. For example: if each side of the finished form measures 10", pattern should measure about 12" from point to point.

Cut strip for boxing 31" long. Stitch boxing to one section of the muslin starting at one point with the end of strip extending ½" above the point where seamlines cross. Pivot at other points the same as for a square corner.

Inside Corner. When stitching boxing strip to an inside corner (square cut-out for example) stitch to ½" beyond corner. Leave needle in fabric and raise presser bar. Now clip corner in diagonally to needle (A) and pivot fabric on needle. Bring edges together in a straight line and continue to stitch.



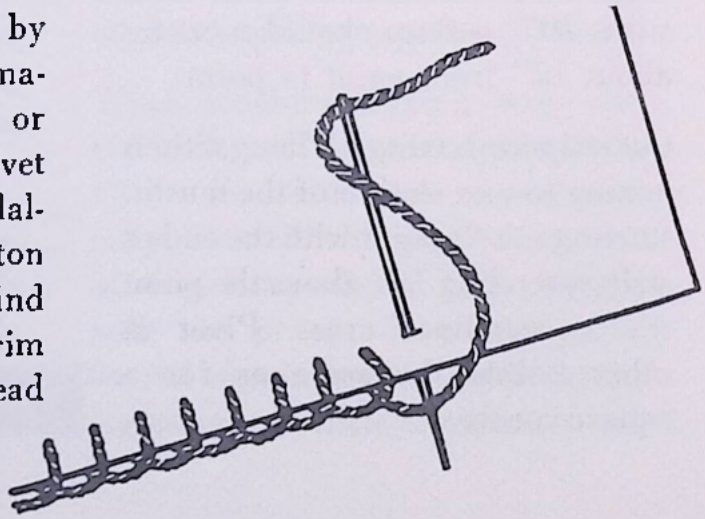
Trims and Finishes

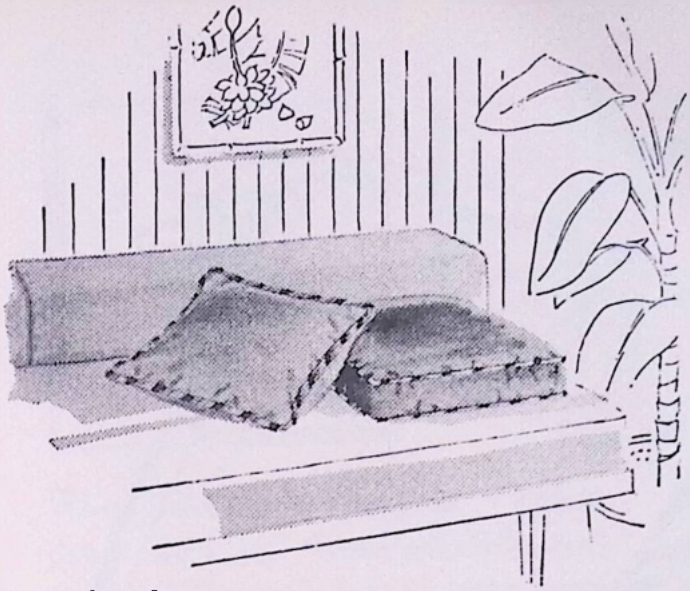


Braid, Fringe, Narrow Ribbon, Tassels, etc. There is generally a wide selection of decorator trims available in the notion section adjacent to the decorative fabric department, or at the notion and trimming counters of most stores.

Braids, banding, rick rack, medallions, etc. are either sewn on by hand using a slip-stitch, or by machine using either the straight or zigzag stitch. When applying velvet ribbon, metallic braids and medallions to pile fabrics, such as cotton velvet and velveteen, you may find it more satisfactory to sew the trim on by hand. Use a matching thread and a blanket-stitch.

Blanket-stitch. Insert needle 1/16" or ⅛" inside edge of braid or medallion. Bring needle out through fabric along edge of trim and through loop in the thread so that it forms a blanket-stitch. Continue along edge spacing the stitches evenly, about 1/16" apart.

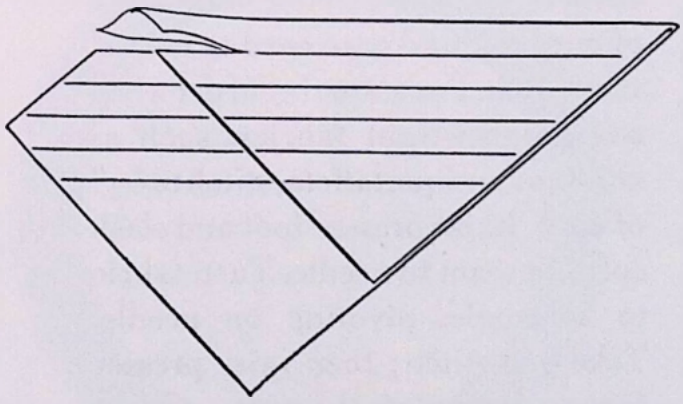




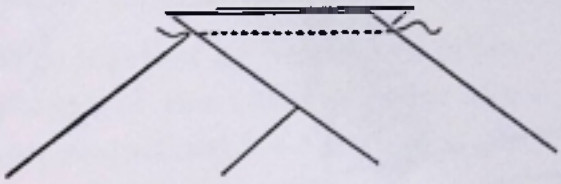
Cording

This is perhaps the most popular edge finish for cushions of all types, shapes and sizes. The cord is covered with either self-fabric, or contrasting fabric and color. Fabric is cut on the true bias and should be 1″ wide plus the circumference of the cord—usually a medium size cable cord, #40 or #90 is used.

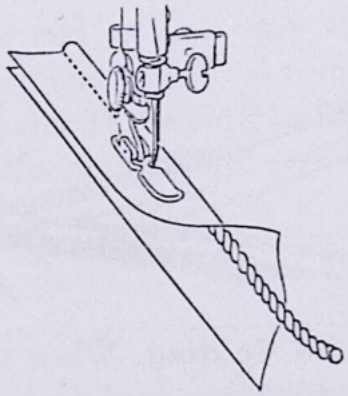
For a true bias bring the lengthwise thread of the fabric evenly along the crosswise thread. The fold resulting is the true bias. Press the fold lightly. Mark the width for bias strips, measuring from the fold.



Join bias strips on the lengthwise grain. Maintain evenness of strips by extending points beyond the edges the width of the seam—¼″. Position needle at point of crossing and stitch. Press seam as stitched; then press seam open.

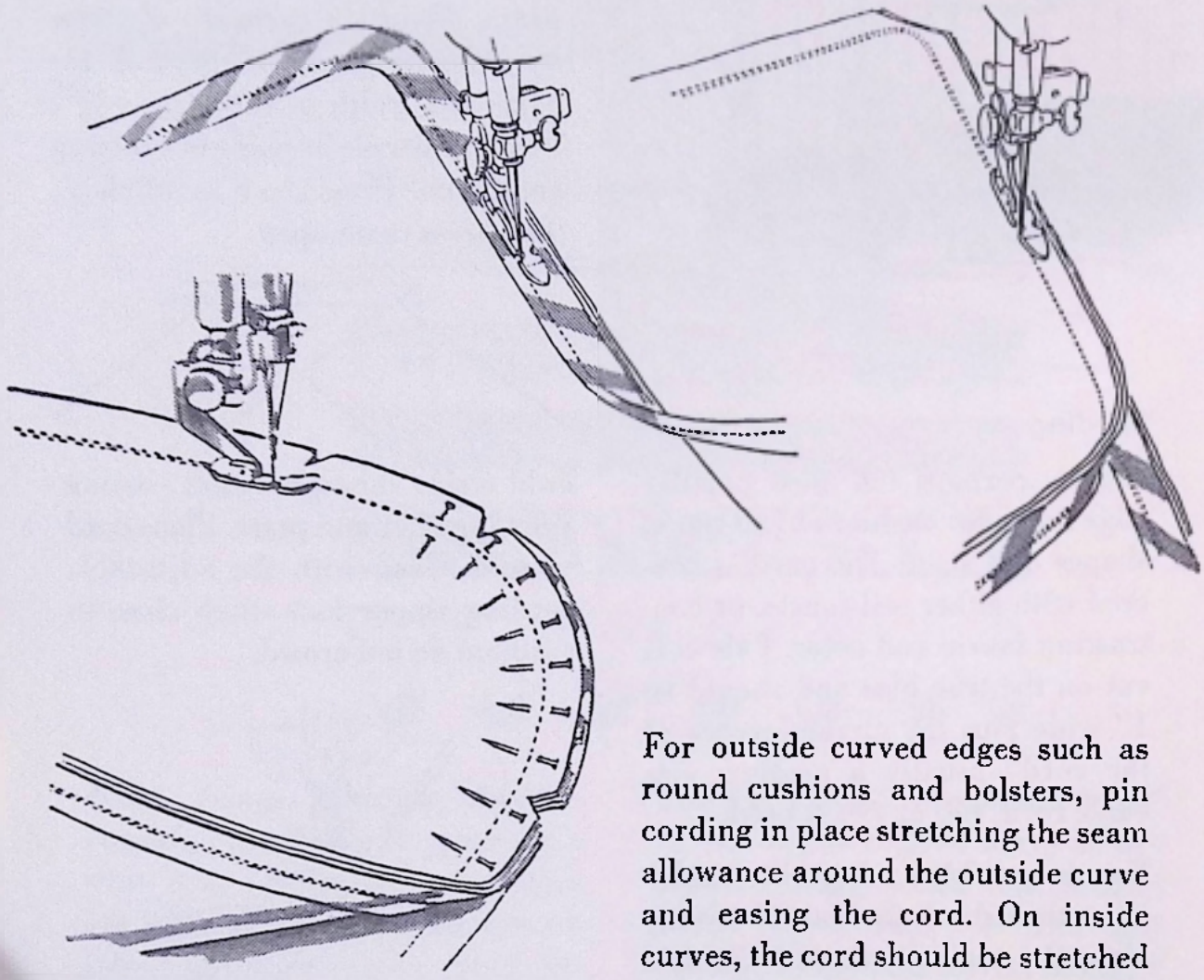


Fold strips through center, wrong sides together and press. Place cord in fold. Then with the adjustable cording zipper foot stitch close to cord but do not crowd.



Stitch cording to one side of seam; then place the matching seam edge under the corded edge, right sides together, and pin. Stitch between cord and previous row of stitching, crowding foot against cord.

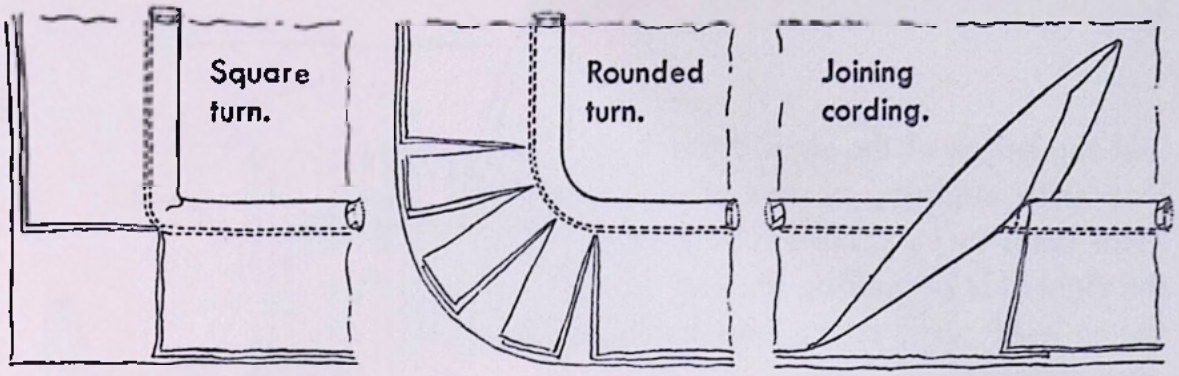
Blend seam edges, trimming outer edges to ¼″ and cording edges slightly less. Turn cover to the right side and insert cushion form. Close opening by hand. See page 22.



Double Cording. When two rows of cording are used on covers, for either box or knife edge cushions, stitch cording to each side of seam before joining the two sections of the cover. Match corners, right sides together, and pin. First, stitch diagonally across each corner; then stitch all around. Leave an opening for inserting cushion form. Slip-stitch opening together between rows of cording and as close to line of stitching as possible.

For outside curved edges such as round cushions and bolsters, pin cording in place stretching the seam allowance around the outside curve and easing the cord. On inside curves, the cord should be stretched and seam allowance eased slightly.

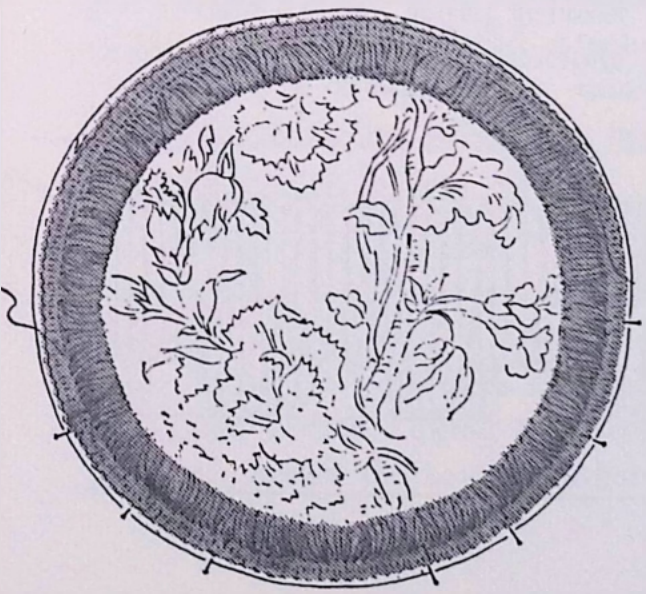
For smooth corners when using a heavy fabric and cording, round the corners slighly. Stretch seam edge of cording, and ease cord at curve; then stitch. For a square corner when using lightweight fabrics, such as chintz or antique taffeta, stitch to ½" of edge. Raise presser foot and slash cording seam to needle. Turn fabric to an angle, pivoting on needle. Take one stitch; then raise presser foot and complete the turn.



When joining cording in a seam, draw cord ½" from starting end and cut. Smooth fabric back over cord and turn edge of bias under ¼". Cut finishing end of the cording so that ends of cord meet. Turn bias edge over cord ends and stitch.

Fringe Edge

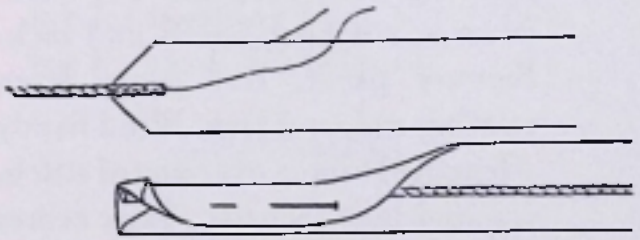
Pin heading of fringe to edge of cover section. The distance from the edge of cover depends on how much of the heading you wish to take in the ½" seam. Ease fringe to corners and edge of circles so that the fringe will fall smooth—not drawn—when seam is turned to the inside. Stitch and whip ends of fringe together by hand. Join other sections of the cushion cover the same as outlined for a corded edge.



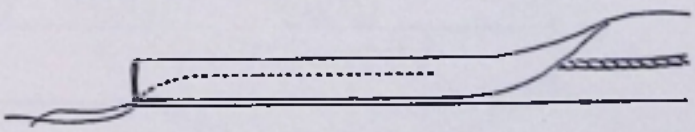
Tubing

For Tassels and Fringe. Cut strips of fabric on the true bias about 1" wide for 3/16" tubing. See page 9 for cutting and joining bias strips.

Shape one end of bias strip to a point. Stitch end of a small cord to the wrong side of the point as illustrated. Turn point down over the

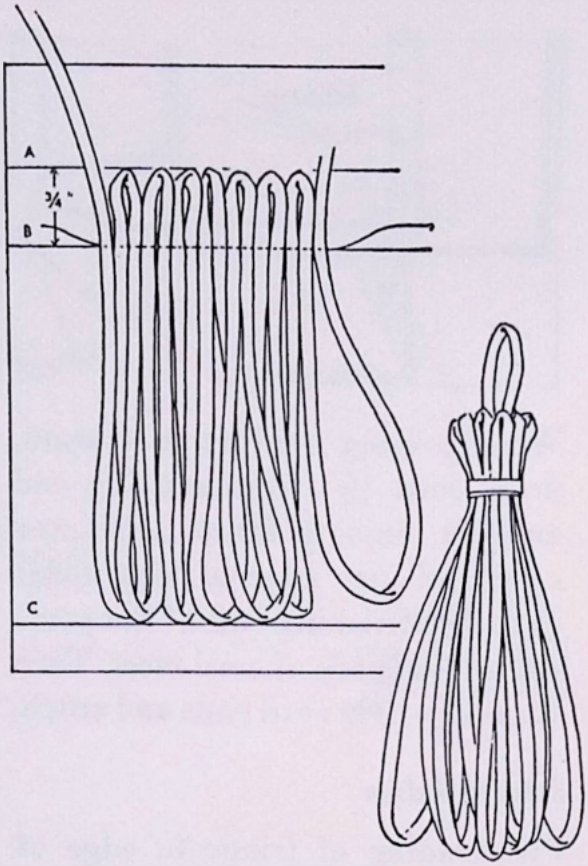


right side of fabric. Fold bias strip around cord and stitch, using the adjustable cording zipper foot and a short stitch length. Form a funnel shape at the turned point. Taper the funnel for about 1", and to 3/16" from fold. Stitch 3/16" from

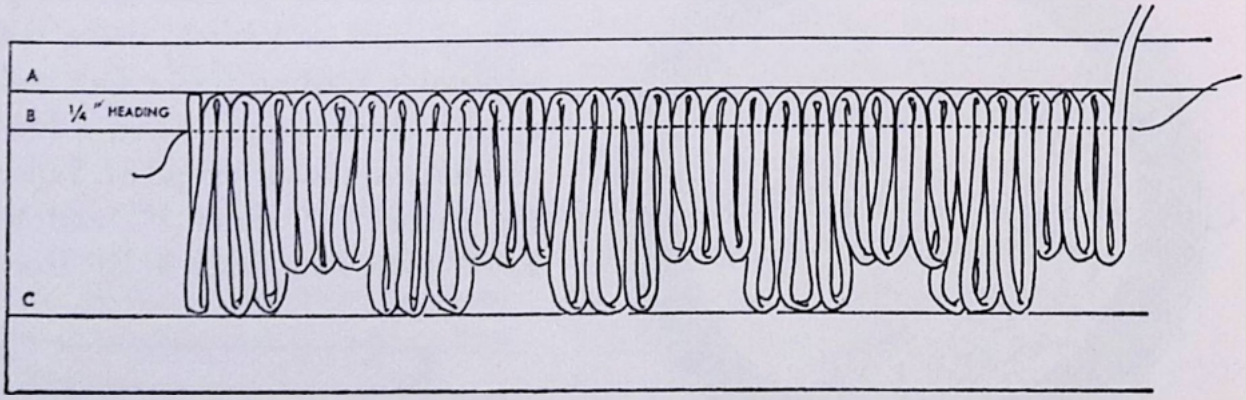


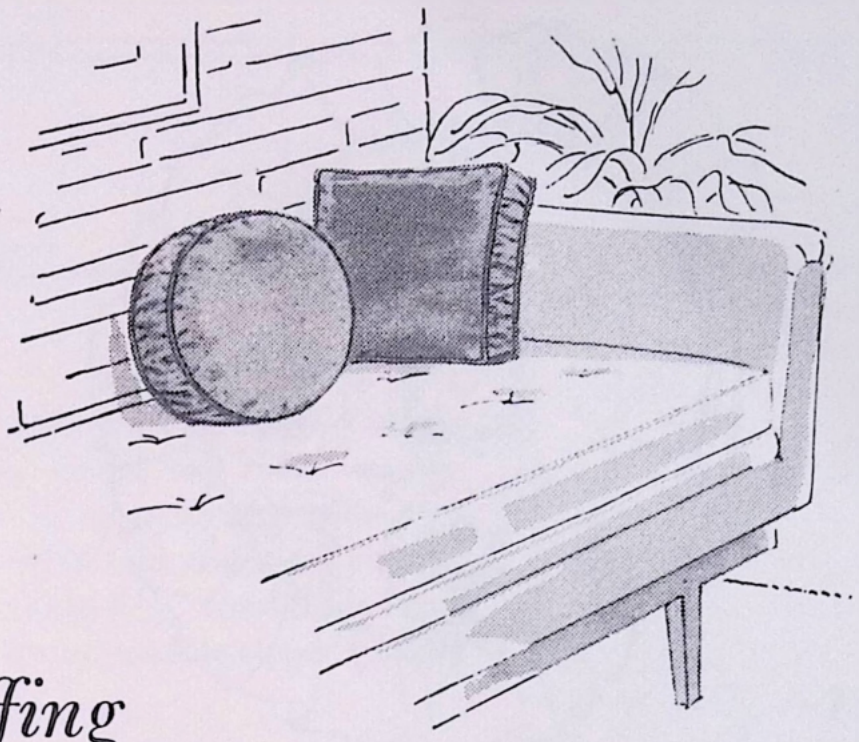
fold the length of the strip. Stretch bias strip slightly, as you stitch. Trim seam to 1/8". Turn tubing to the right side by pulling the end of the encased cord, easing bias back over opposite end. Press.

Loop Tassel. As a guide, draw two straight lines on a strip of paper 3/4" apart. Draw a third line to indicate length of tassel. With end of tubing extending 2 1/4" beyond the top line, loop tubing between lines A and C keeping edges even. Stitch across the loops, on stitching line B, as illustrated. Make about 7 loops and cut off last loop above stitching line. Turn the 2 1/4" end down to stitching line B and tack. Remove paper. Roll loops from starting end, and tack. Wind firmly a length of tubing over line of stitching and tack securely. Tack center loop to position on cushion.



Loop Fringe. Follow instructions for making tassel guide, except first draw two lines (A and B) 1/4" apart for heading, instead of 3/4" apart. Stitch on line B as loops are formed. Make a second row of stitching close to line A before removing paper. For an uneven edge shorten groups of loops as shown.

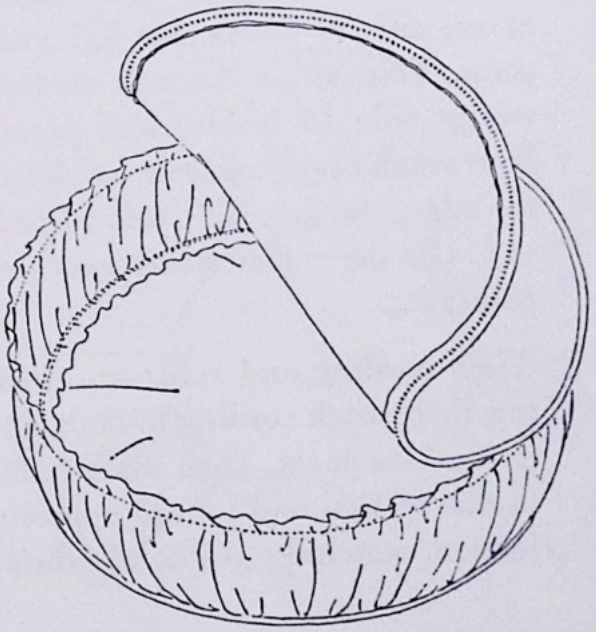


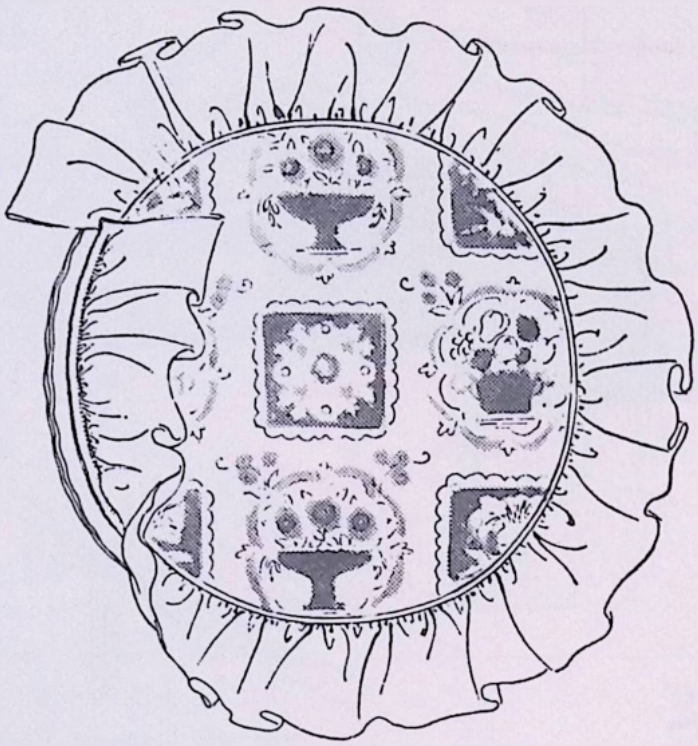


Puffing

The puffed boxing may be joined with a plain seam or combined with cording. Cut the boxing strips on the crosswise grain of the fabric. Allow ½" on width for seams and the length should be from two to two-and-one-half times the circumference of the cushion for fullness. Stitch ends of strips together and press seams open. Gather both edges of the strip using the ruffler attachment. Use a scrap of the same fabric to test ruffler adjustment before gathering boxing strip.

If cording is used, stitch it to the edge of the two cover sections. See page 9 for covering a cord and page 11 for joining ends of cording. Join puffed boxing to cover sections. Match the row of gathering to cording stitches. Pin and baste if necessary. Stitch. If edges are corded use the adjustable cording zipper foot and stitch between stitching and cord. Leave an opening for inserting form. Close opening by hand. See page 22.



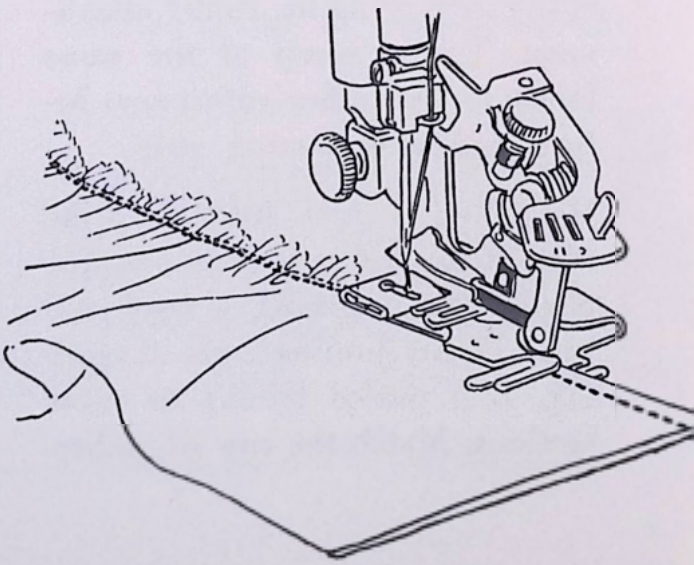


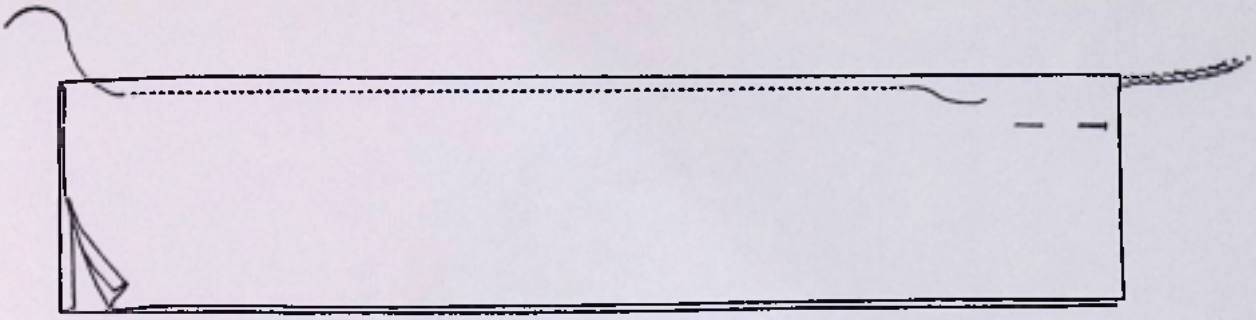
Ruffles

Double Ruffle. Cut strips for ruffle on the crosswise grain or true bias of fabric, twice the width of finished ruffle and allow ½″ for seam. Allow one-and-a-half to twice the circumference of the cushion for fullness. Join ends of strips; then press seams open. Turn edge, at one end, to wrong side ¼″ and press. Fold strips through center, wrong side to inside, and press. Now stitch edges together ¼″ from the edge, starting ¼″ from turned end. Use the ruffler attachment for gathering.

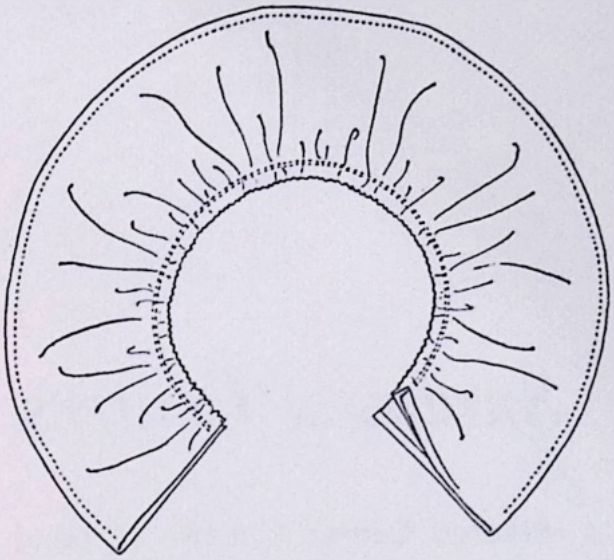
When cording and ruffle are used together, stitch cording to both sections of the cover. Then stitch ruffle to one section and join to opposite section, matching grains of fabric. Leave opening for inserting cushion form. Close opening by hand.

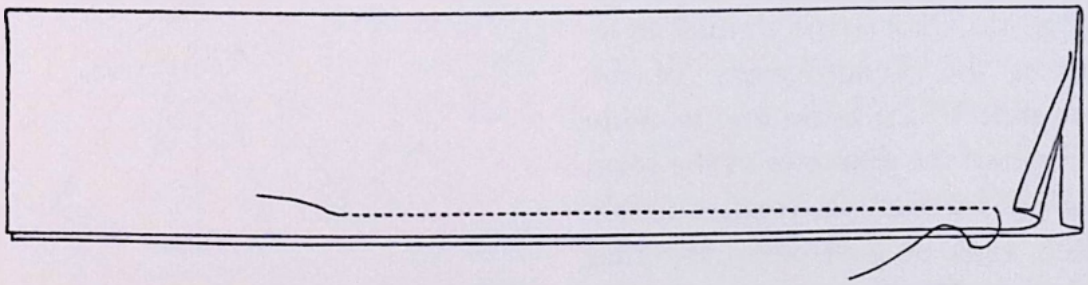
To join ends of ruffle, allow ¼″ overlap at finishing end. Insert end between the turned edges at the starting point. Pin and slip-stitch together by hand. Direct needle through fold of turned edge, concealing stitches.



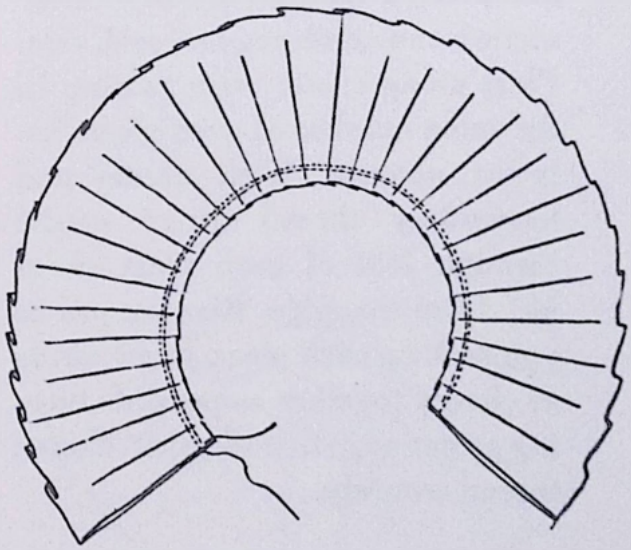


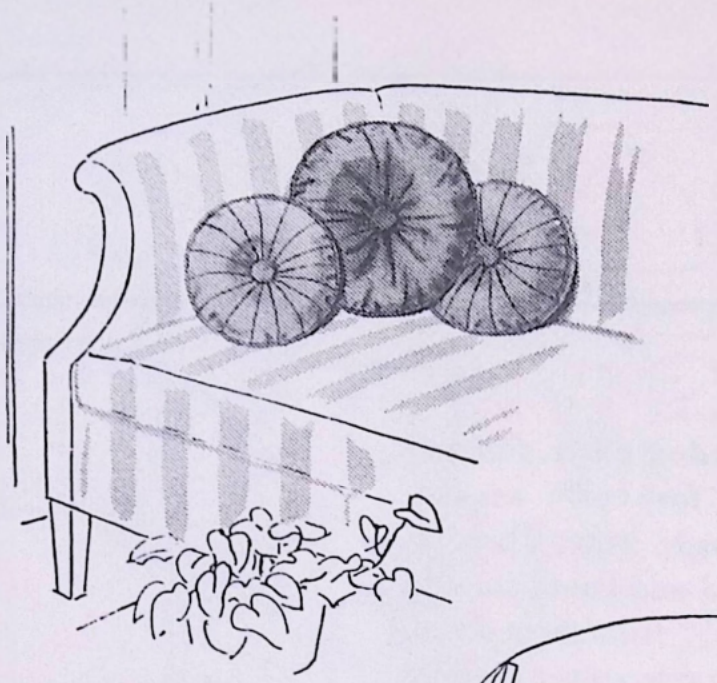
Ruffle with Corded Edge. Cut and prepare strips for ruffle as suggested on opposite page. Then insert cord in fold and stitch close to cord, starting ¼″ from turned end, using the adjustable zipper cording foot.



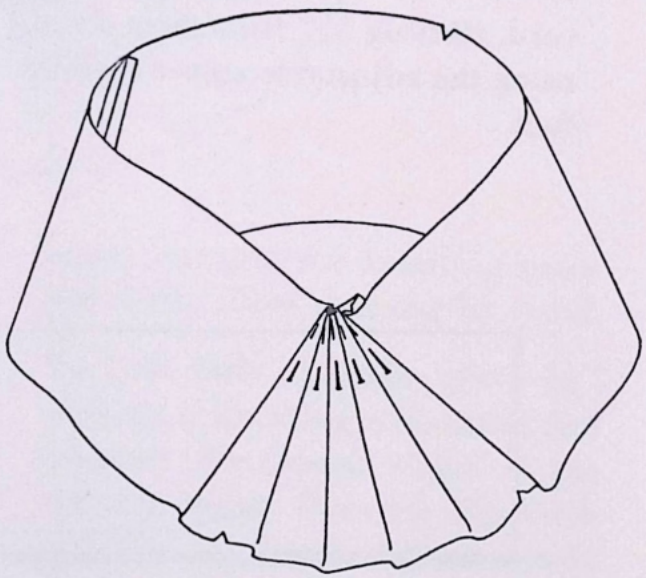


Pleated Ruffle. Prepare strips for pleating as suggested for double ruffle. Adjust ruffler attachment for widest pleating. Pleat strip; then press pleats evenly to the fold. Crisp, medium-weight or sheer fabrics such as taffeta, chintz and organdy are best for pleating.

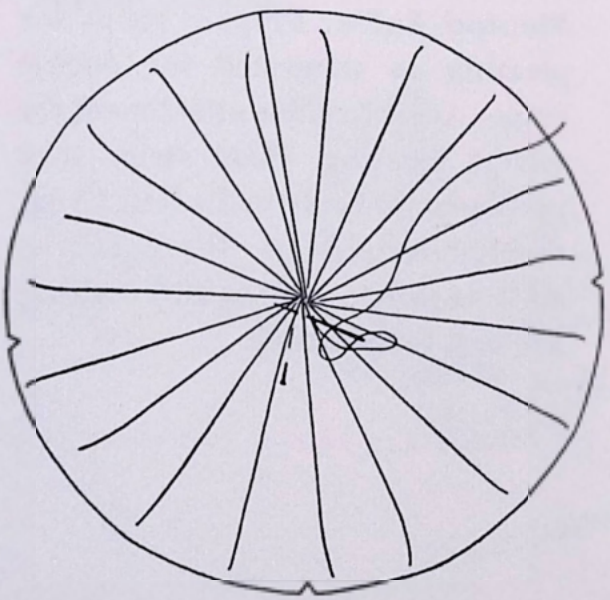




Sunburst Centers



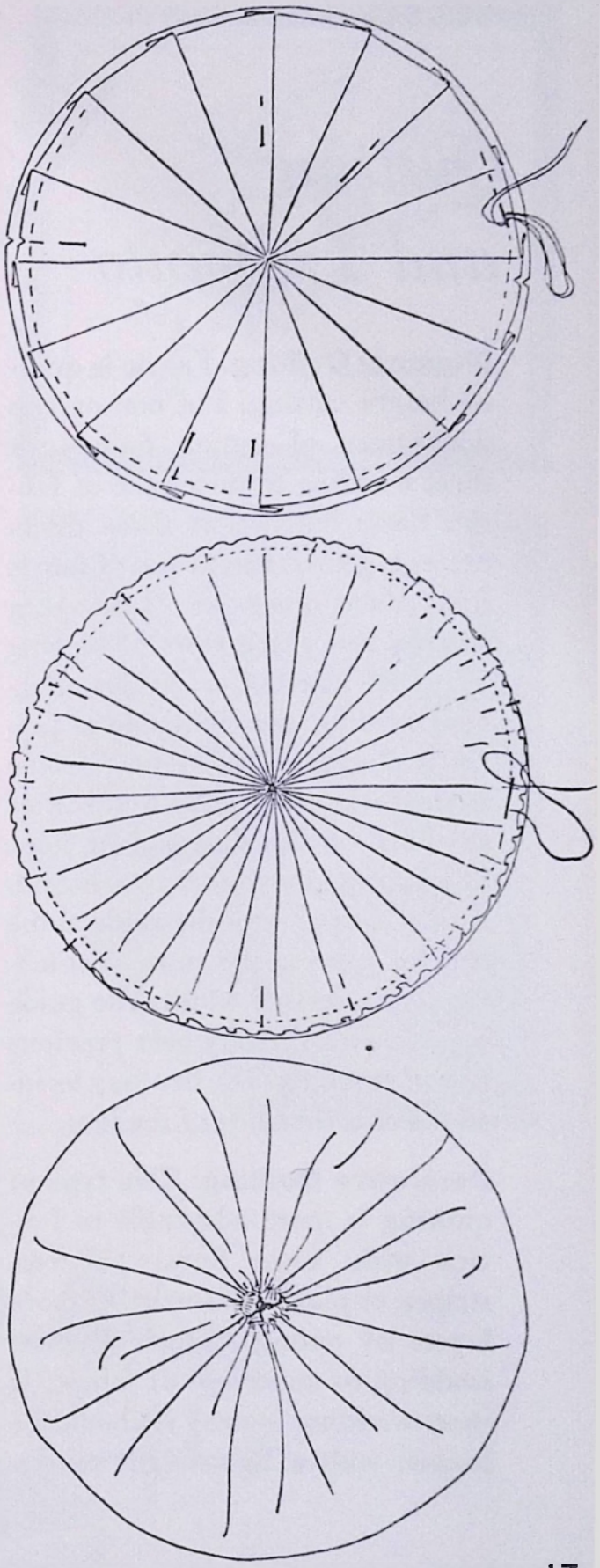
Pleated Center. Cut two strips of fabric on the true bias or the crosswise grain. The strips should be as long as the circumference of the form plus 1″ for seam and as wide as one-half the diameter of the form plus ¾″ for seam and center finish. Stitch ends of each strip together and press. Divide strip into quarter section and notch edge on each side. Pleat along center edge putting in the same number of even pleats between notches. With needle and heavy-duty thread direct needle through fold of each pleat about ⅛″ from the edge. Remove pin as you pick up each pleat. Draw pleats as closely together as possible turning center edge to underside. Fasten thread securely.



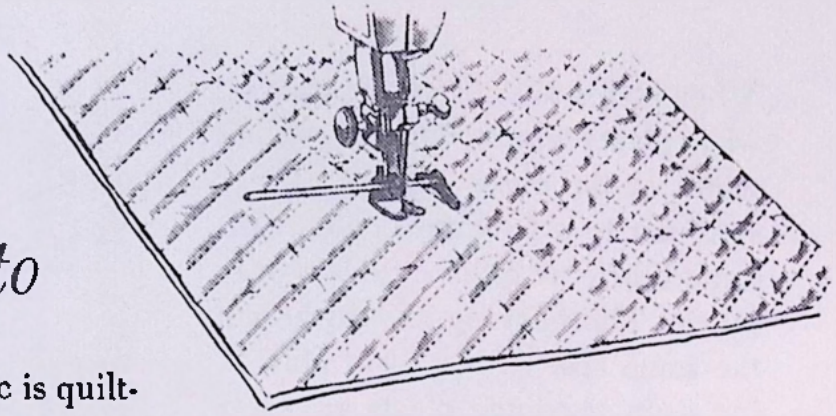
When strips are cut on the bias or, when pleats taper to about ⅓″ their width at the outer edge, baste the sunburst to a backing made of the same fabric or other closely woven fabric. The backing should be cut the same size as the form plus 1″ for seam. Arrange pleats at center and taper fullness to outer edge or gather outer edge and baste to backing. Join the two sections of the cover with a plain, corded or fringe seam finish.

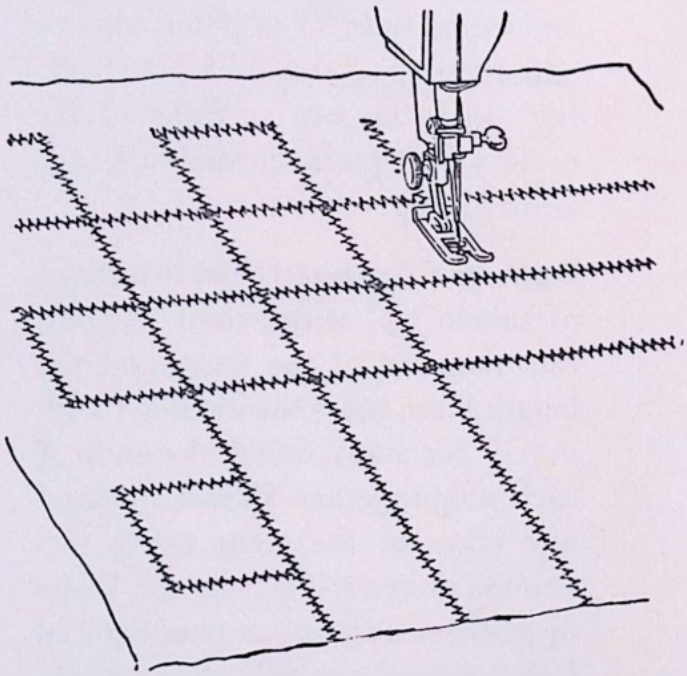
Gathered Sunburst. Cut two strips of fabric ½″ wider than one-half the diameter of the form and the length three times the diameter adding 1″ for seam. Stitch the ends of each strip together. Gather by hand one edge of the strip using two strands of heavy-duty thread. Draw up gathers as tight as possible and fasten thread securely. Cut a backing of self-fabric or muslin the same size as the form plus 1″ for seam. Baste backing to underside of each gathered section. Assemble cover the same as for pleated sunburst.

Self-covered buttons, one on each side, drawn as close together as possible, complete the sunburst design. See page 18 for sewing on buttons.



Quilting and Trapunto



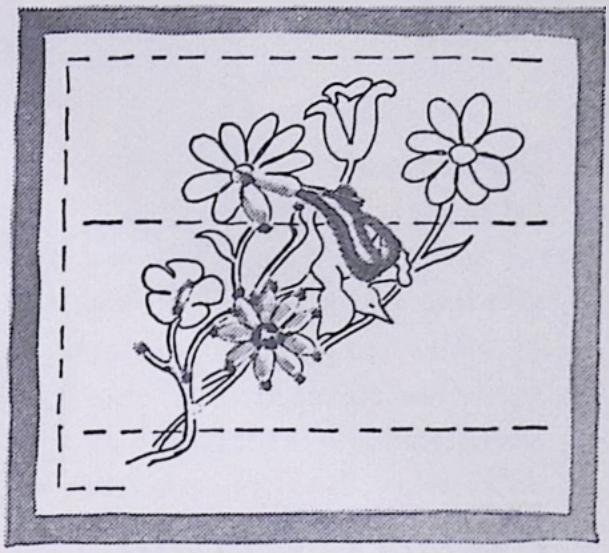


Diagonal Quilting. Fabric is quilted before cutting. Pin one or two thicknesses of outing fiannel or sheet wadding to underside of fabric. Baste the two or three thicknesses together, lengthwise of fabric first, then crosswise. Take long stitches and space rows of basting 5″ or 6″ apart. Usually for diagonal quilting, the right side of fabric is placed down, or next to the feed. Mark padding for first row of stitching on the diagonal or bias. Stitch, using the quilter attachment. Adjust the bar with the guide at the end for spacing the rows of stitching to the desired width. The guide is positioned directly over previous row of stitching. The bar may be inserted on either side of the foot.

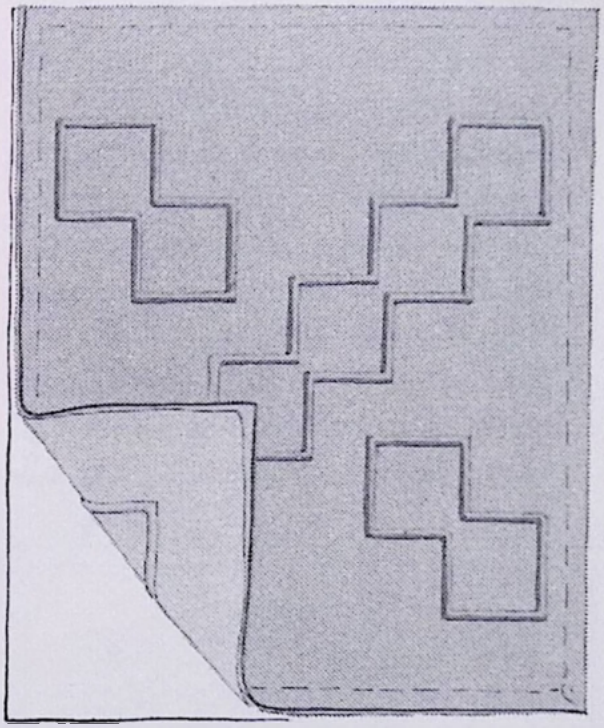
Decorative Quilting. This type of quilting is more adaptable to fabrics with large floral patterns, stripes, or plaids. Baste two or more layers of outing flannel or sheet wadding to underside of fabric. If sheet wadding is used it should be backed with a lightweight muslin or batiste to prevent wear when stitching. Adjust zigzag machine or zigzag attachment for one of the many stitch patterns, and outline the design with decorative stitching. Stitch from the right side of fabric when quilting plaids, stripes or floral designs.

Trapunto. The fabric for cushion cover is backed with a sheer fabric, such as lawn, or organdy on which

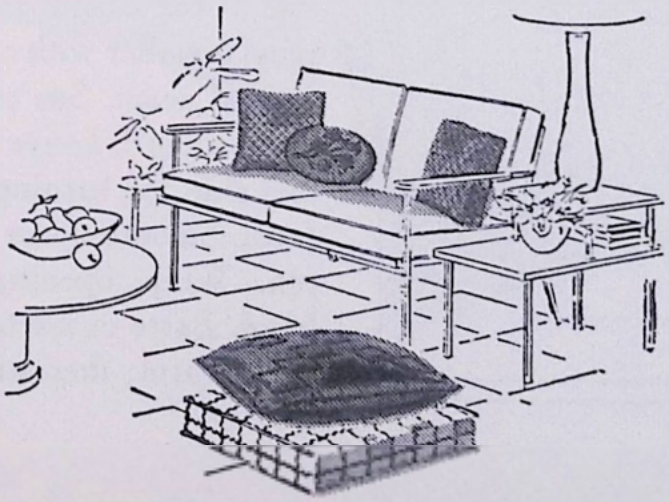
the design has been traced or stamped. Baste backing to wrong side of fabric. With space guide removed, use the quilting foot when stitching designs. Use thread to match or contrast with the fabric and a short stich. When the stitching is complete, tie thread ends securely on underside. The design is padded with strands of yarn. Use a tapestry or darning needle to carry the thread. Pass needle between backing and cover from one end of design to the other. Stretch each portion of the design before cutting yarn. If necessary, draw yarn through a second time to fill design.

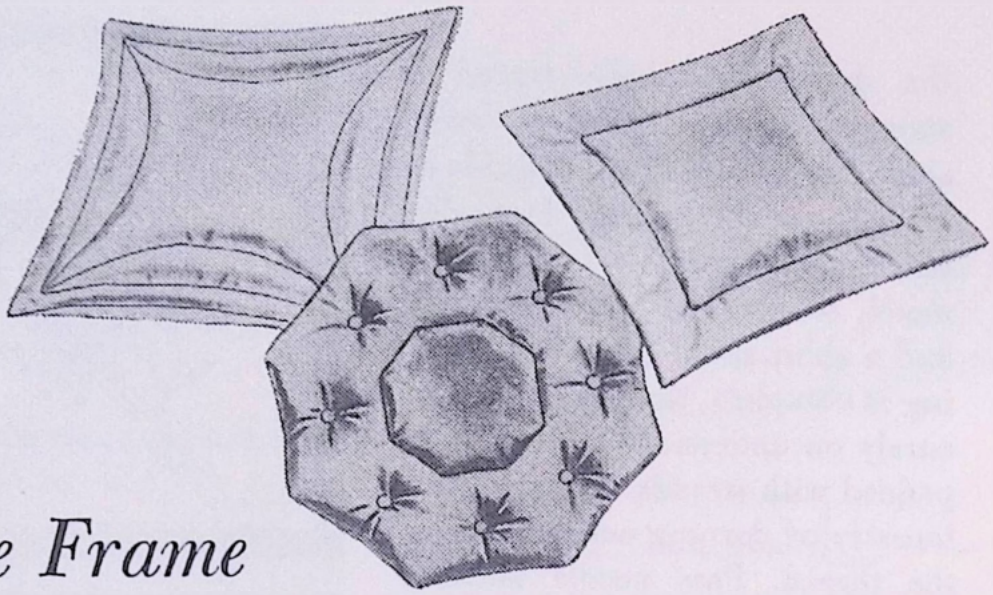


When design is completely filled stretch each portion again on the bias; then clip ends of yarn close to backing.



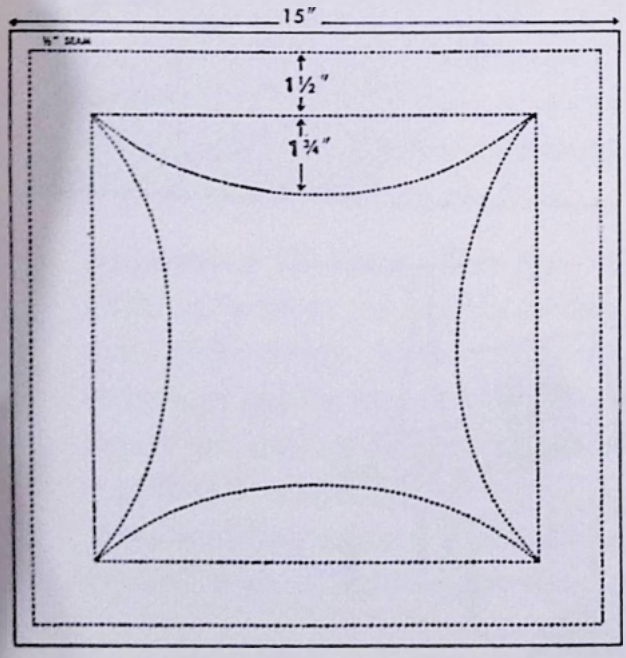
Line the quilted sections of the cover with one thickness of outing flannel, cut the same size and shape. Baste flannel to underside of each section near seamline.





Picture Frame

To create the picture frame design, start with a thin, knife edge form and add one, two or three rows of stitching. When making form, cut the two pieces of muslin the size desired with ½" on all edges for seam. Draw lines for stitching on the right side of each section. With right sides together, stitch taking a ½" seam. Leave a 6" opening for filling. Clip corners diagonally, press, and turn right side out. Fill with kapok or other filling. Press filling firmly into corners and along the seams. Turn edges of opening to inside and stitch together by hand or machine. Hand-baste on drawn lines, through filling and muslin, using a curved needle and heavy-duty thread. Draw up thread as tightly as possible. Adjust machine for a long stitch, 8 or 10 stitches to an inch; then stitch along basting line.



Cut fabric for outer cover the same size as for muslin form. Stitch sections together with either a plain or corded seam. See page 9 for covering a cord. Leave an opening on one side for turning and inserting form. Smooth cover over form and pin. Whip opening together by hand. Baste cover to stitched lines of the form; then stitch.

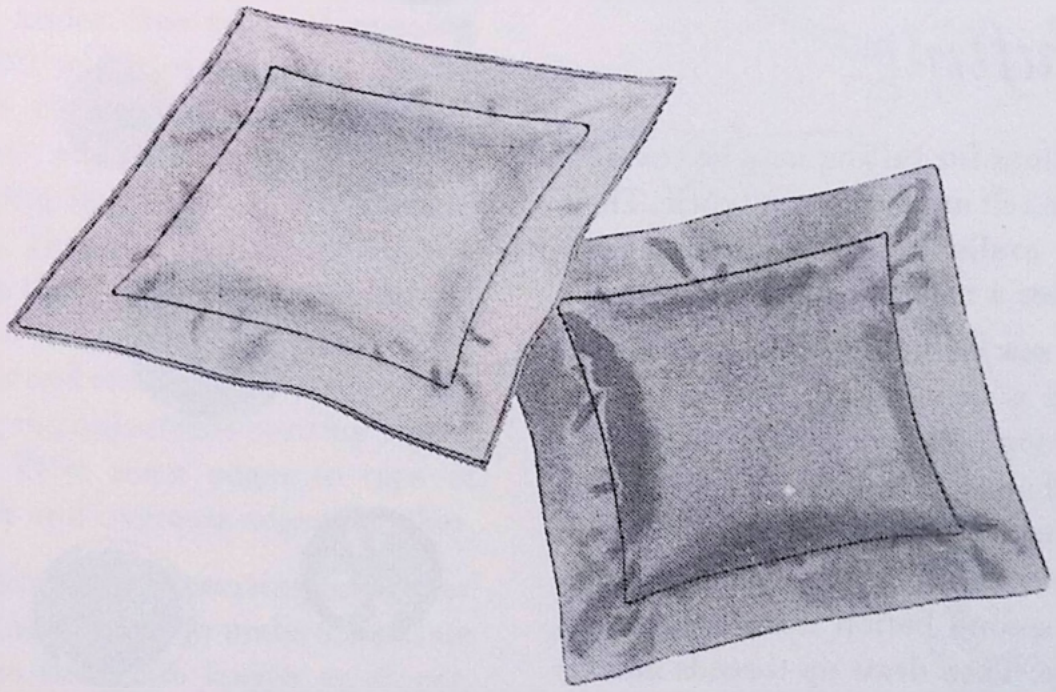
The Flange Edge

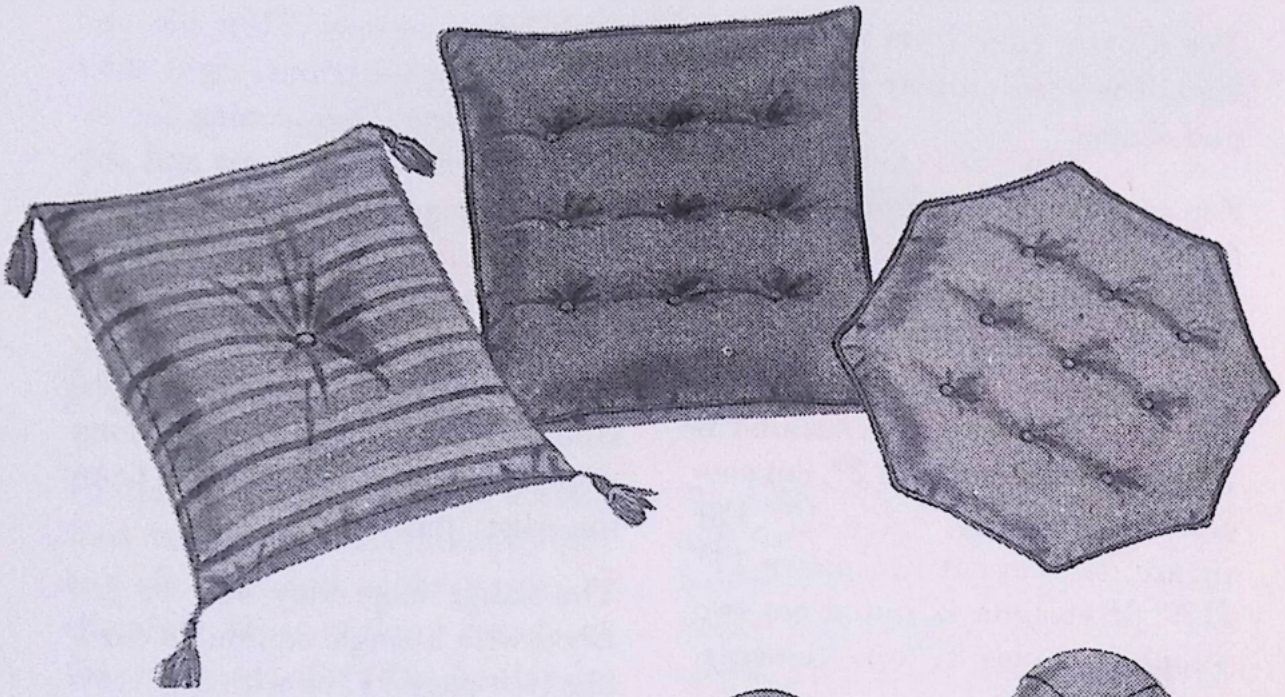
Use a knife edge form for this design. The cushion may be any size and shape.

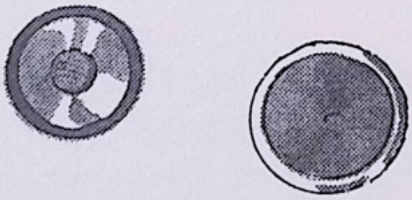
For cover, first determine width of finished flange edge; then cut two pieces of the fabric the diameter of the form plus twice the width of flange and add 1″ for seams. For example: if diameter of cushion is 12″ and width of flange 2″, cut cover sections 12″+4″+1″=17″. For square cushion cut two pieces 17″ x17″. If cushion is round cut two complete circles 17″ in diameter.

Mark center of form and center of each cover section. Then pin and stitch the two sections, right sides together. Leave an opening for inserting form. Press seams and clip corners diagonally. Turn cover to right side. Smooth seams and shape corners. Insert form and match center markings on both sides. Pin. Turn in edges of opening and slip-stitch. Baste cover together along edge of form an even distance from the edge; then stitch.

The flange edge may also be finished with a single or double cording (see page 9), or with a narrow fringe. See page 11.





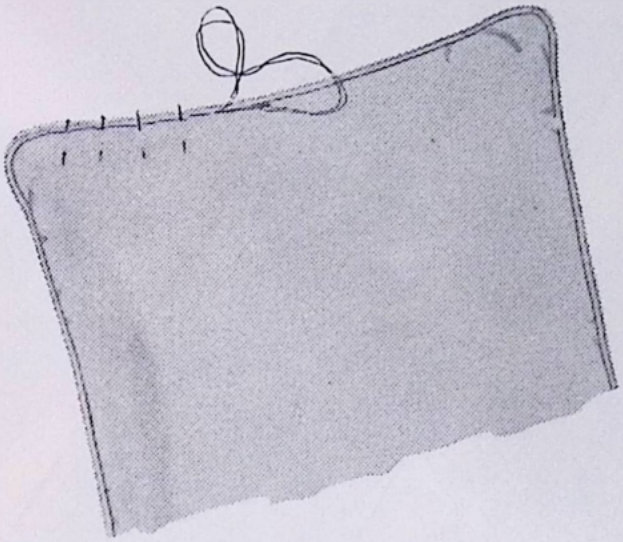


Tufting

Buttons for tufting may be covered with self or contrasting fabric. They are available in several sizes with either a metal or fabric shank.

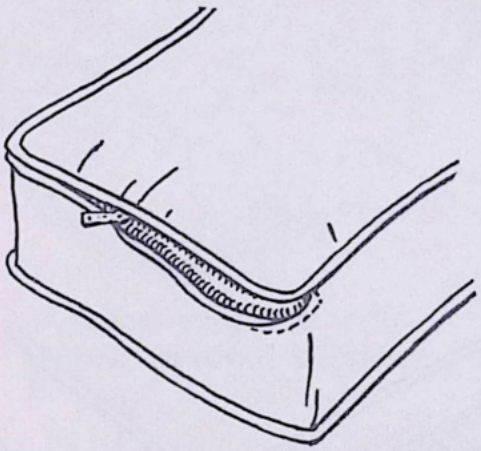
To sew on buttons use a large needle and a strong cord. Run needle up through cushion and through shank of button. Then direct needle back through cushion about ⅛″ from cord. Insert needle through shank of second button from underneath side. Then draw up threads and tie securely under button.

Closures



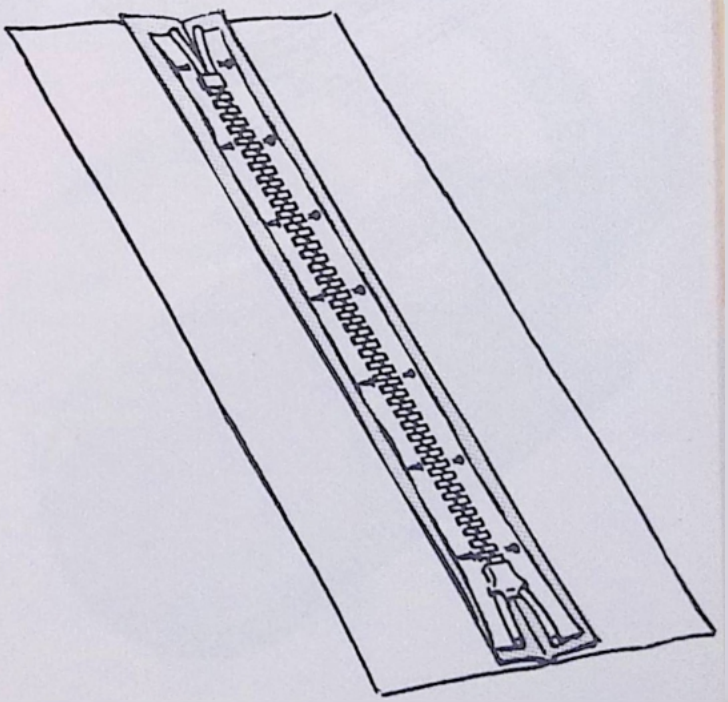
By Hand. Slip outside cover over cushion, pressing corners or seams of form well into corners and seams of cover. Turn free edge of opening to the inside and pin over stitching on opposite edge. Slip-stitch together by hand.

Removable Covers— Zipper Closures

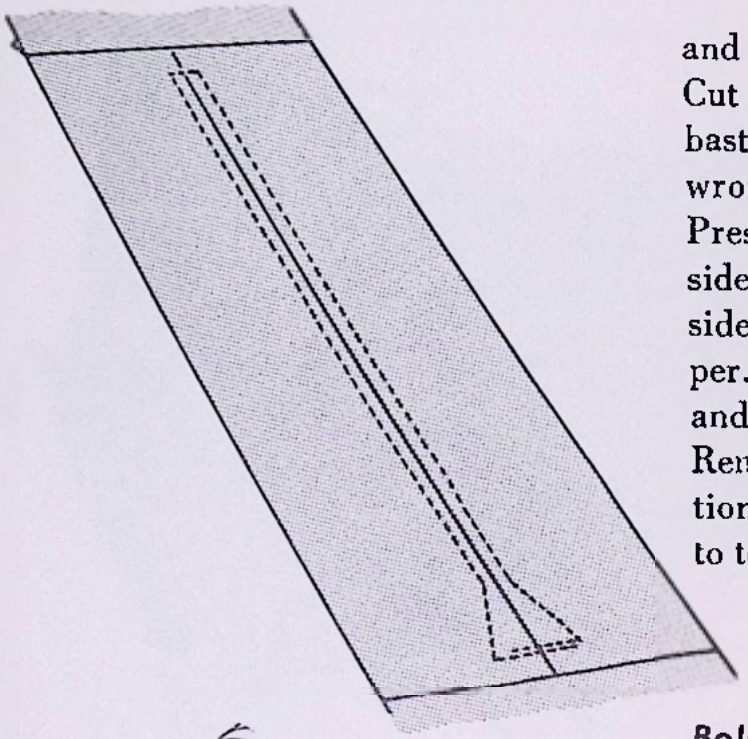


Cushions. For either box or knife edge leave an opening long enough to make removal of cover quick and easy. The zipper should be about 1″ shorter than the opening.

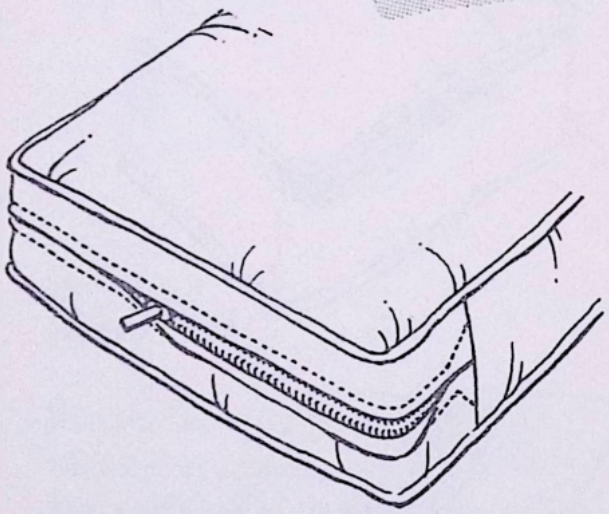
Turn under free edge of opening the full width of seam and baste. Insert zipper, right side up. Pin corded edge to zipper, keeping stitching line clear of metal teeth. Baste. Then pin opposite side to zipper so that folded edge meets stitching of corded edge. Baste. Open zipper and stitch from the right side, using the adjustable cording zipper foot. Trim seam edges to tape of zipper and overcast edges together.



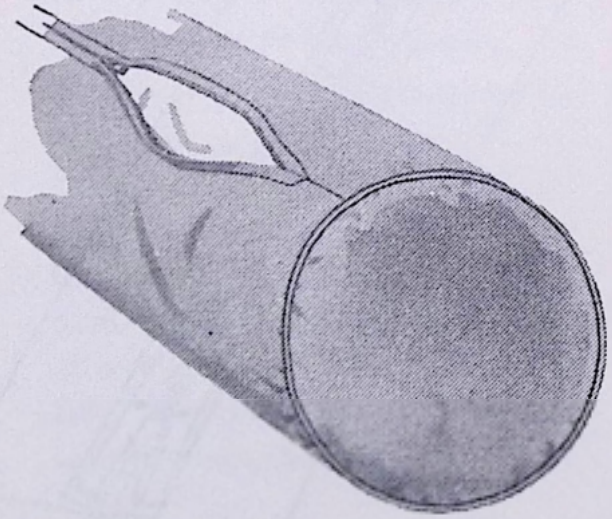
Another way of inserting the zipper in a box cover is to make a separate section the same length as zipper, plus ½″ on each end for seams,



and 1½″ wider than boxing strip. Cut strip through center. Machine-baste center edges together on wrong side, taking a ¾″ seam. Press seam open. Pin zipper, right side up, along seamline on wrong side and baste. Stitch around zipper. Trim seam edge to zipper tape and overcast the two edges together. Remove bastings. Join ends of section to boxing. Then stitch boxing to top and bottom sections of cover.

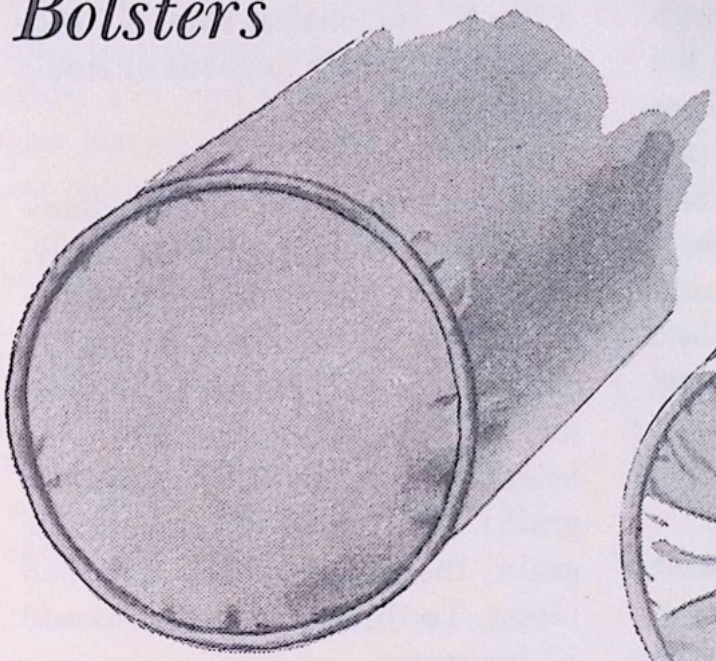


Bolsters. Zipper closures in bolsters may be made in the seam of the center section. When cutting add a ¾″ seam allowance on both edges. Leave an opening 1″ longer than the zipper. Insert zipper before joining the two end sections. Machine-baste opening taking a ¾″ seam. Pin and baste zipper to opening, right side of zipper to wrong side of seam. Keep metal chain in line with machine-basting. Stitch on the right side from end of zipper to the top, about ⅜″ from machine-basting.

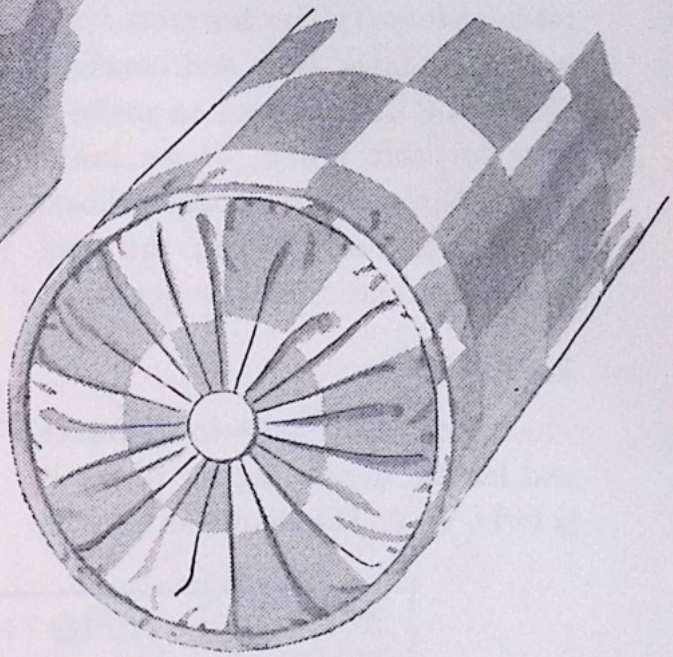


Remove all basting stitches. Join end sections and turn cover to the right side.

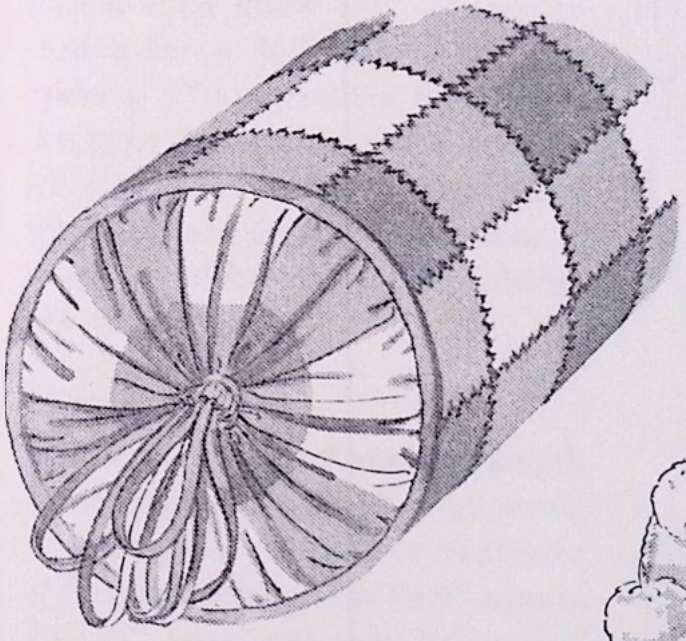
Bolsters



Round bolster
with corded seam.



Pleated sunburst with
fabric covered button.



Gathered sunburst
with tubular tassel.

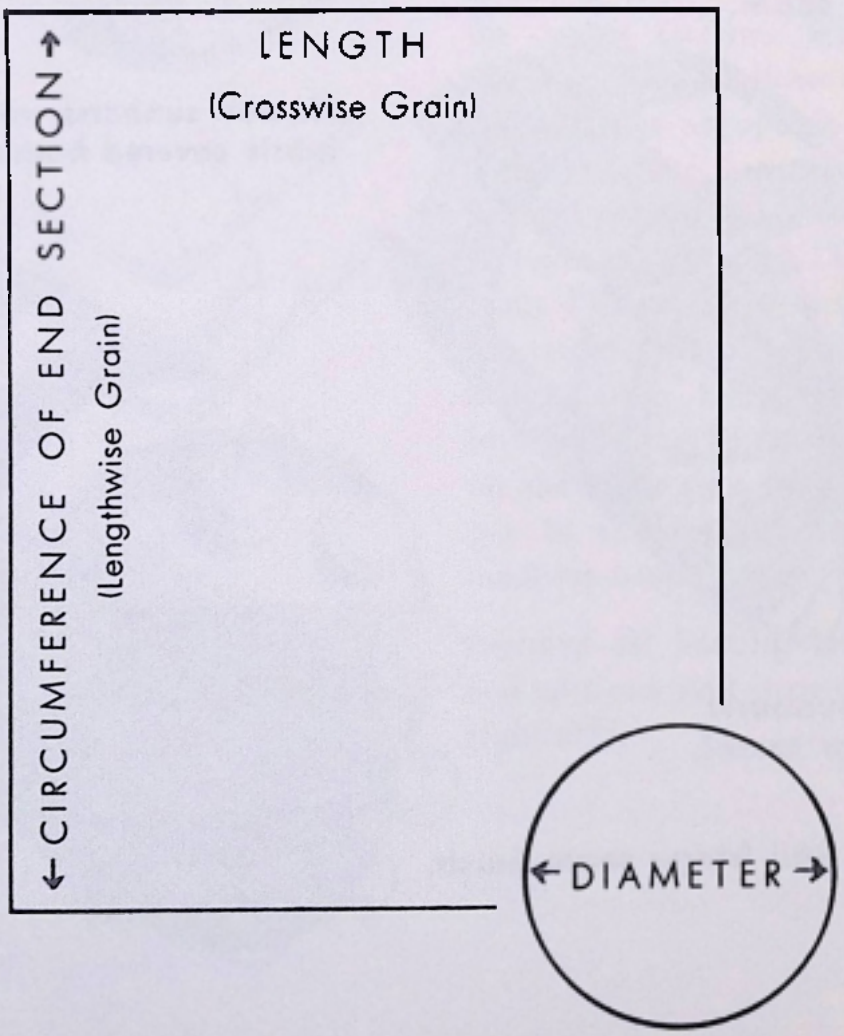
Ball fringe seam finish.

The soft, round bolster made with kapok or other soft filling and the round, square or box type bolster made of foam rubber are most often used for chairs, beds and couches. Muslin or drill is used to make a tube for soft filling, or an inner foundation cover for foam rubber. Cut fabric for tube on the true lengthwise and crosswise grain.

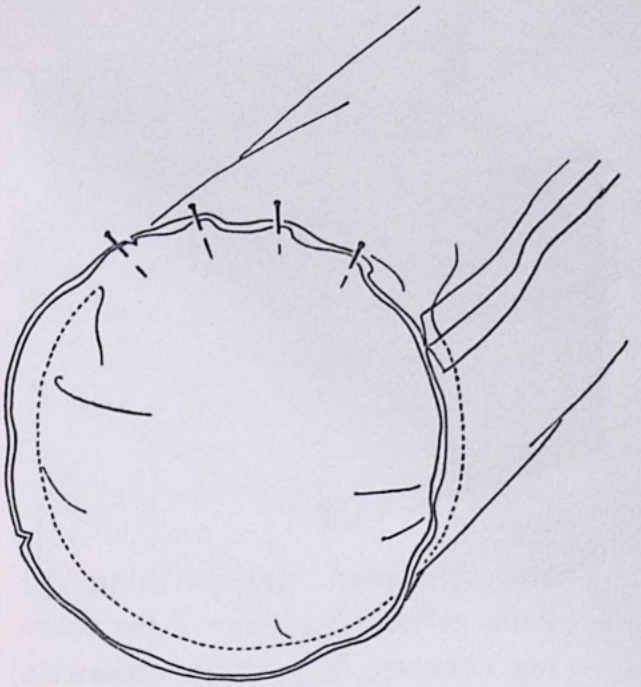
Round Bolster

The bolster size varies in diameter and length, depending on where it is to be used. The diameter may be 5″ to 8″ for chairs, sofas or beds and 6″ to 10″ for daybeds or studio couches.

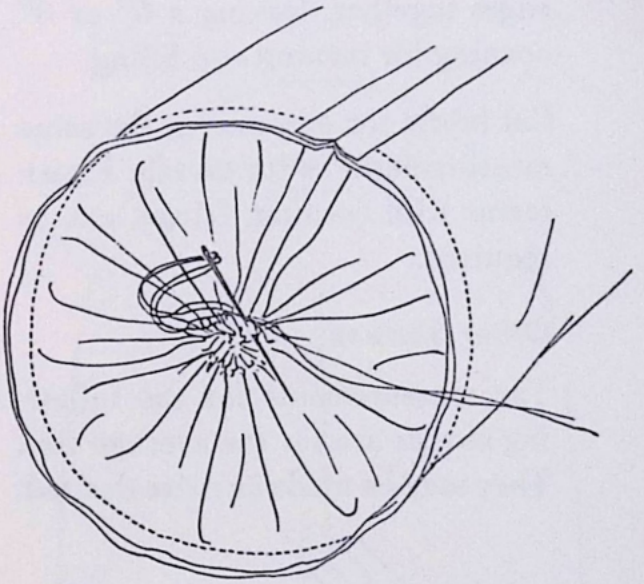
First determine the bolster diameter and cut end pieces accordingly. Cut two complete circles allowing 1″ for ½″ seam. That is, cut 9″ circles if finished bolster is to measure 8″. Then cut one piece the length of the bolster (crosswise grain) and the width (lengthwise grain) the circumference of the end pieces. To these measurements add 1″ for seams.



Bring the crosswise edges of the center section together, right side to inside. Pin and stitch taking ½″ seam leaving a 6″ or 8″ opening near one end for turning and filling. Press seam open. Pin end pieces to the tube, right sides to inside. Baste and stitch. Turn right side out and fill with kapok or other filling. Pack in filling smoothly and firmly to round out the tube. Turn edges of opening to inside and pin. Whip together by hand.

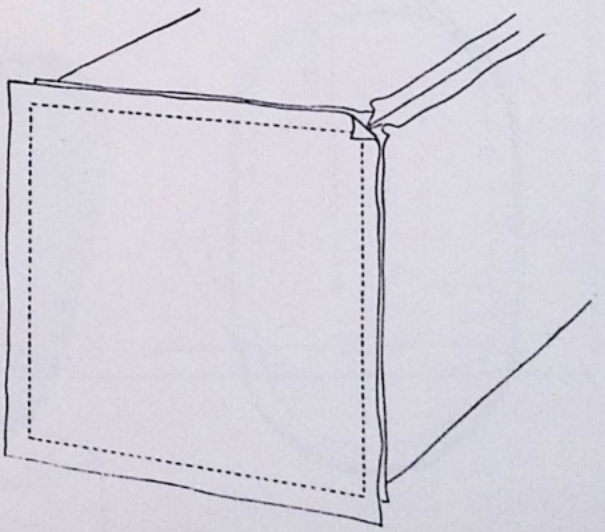


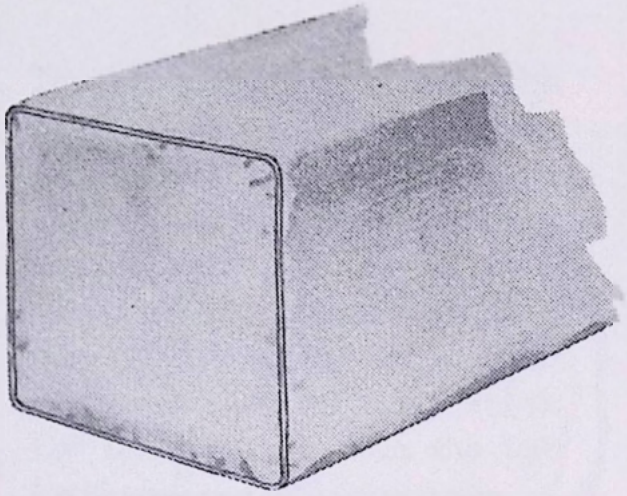
Cut outer cover fabric on the same grain, and to the same measurements as the tube. If a zipper closure is used allow 1½″ on center section for a ¾″ seam. Leave an opening 1″ longer than the zipper. See page 22 for zipper closure. Finish end seams with the same edge finish as used on the chair, sofa, or other furnishings where bolsters are used.



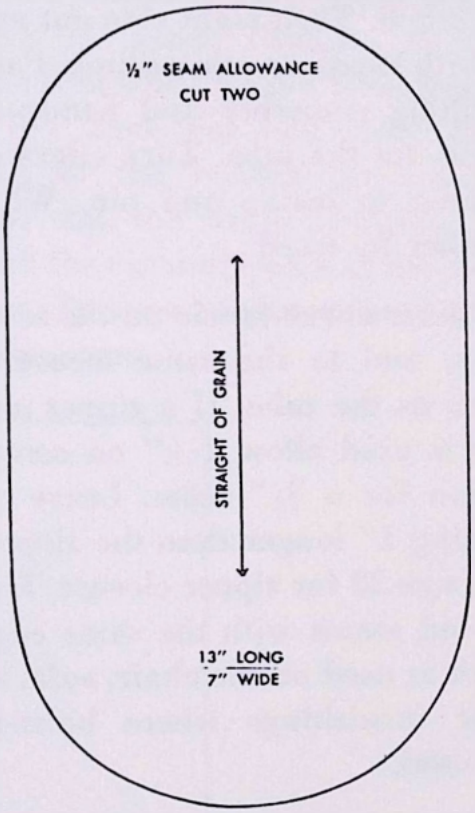
Square Bolster

First decide on thickness and length of bolster; then add 1″ to all measurements for seams. For example: if finished bolster is to be 9″ square by 30″ long, cut two 10″ x 10″ muslin squares. Cut the length of center section (crosswise grain) 31″ and the circumference (lengthwise grain) 37″. Stitch center section to ends, right sides together





The Oval. The end sections should be cut on the true lengthwise grain. The size of the ends determines the height and thickness of bolster. The space where bolster is used determines its length. The construction is the same as for a round bolster.

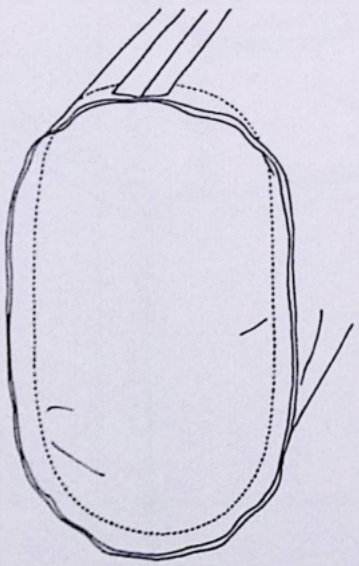


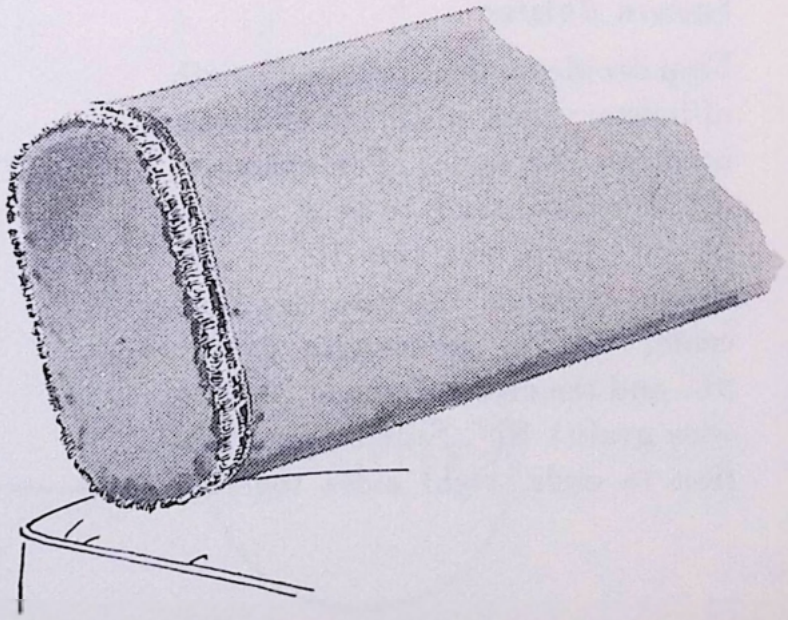
and edges even. Start stitching ½" from corner. See page 7 for turning corners. Now stitch crosswise edges together, leaving a 6" or 8" opening for turning and filling.

Cut fabric for outer cover the same measurements as for casing. Finish seams with cording, fringe, etc. as required.

Other Shapes

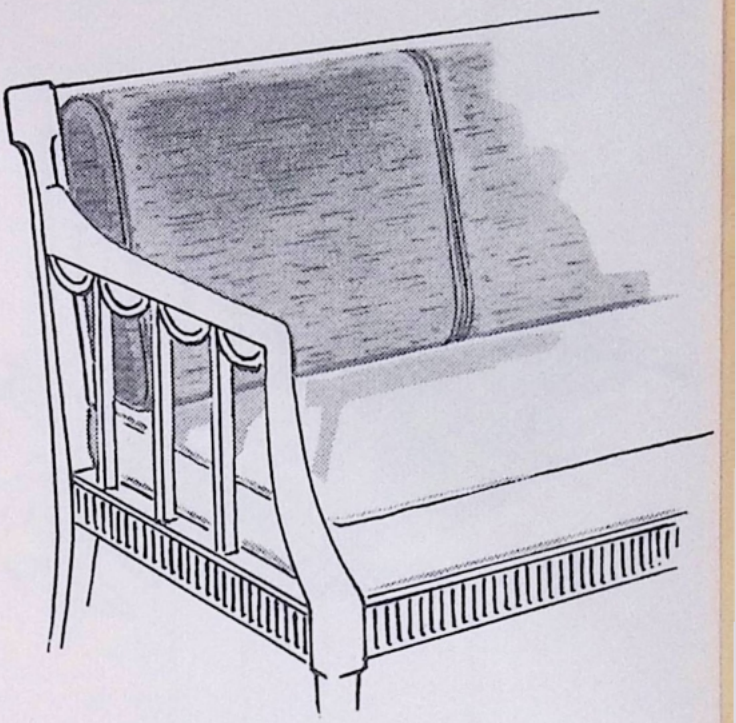
The measurements for the following shapes are for the average size. They may be made any size desired.

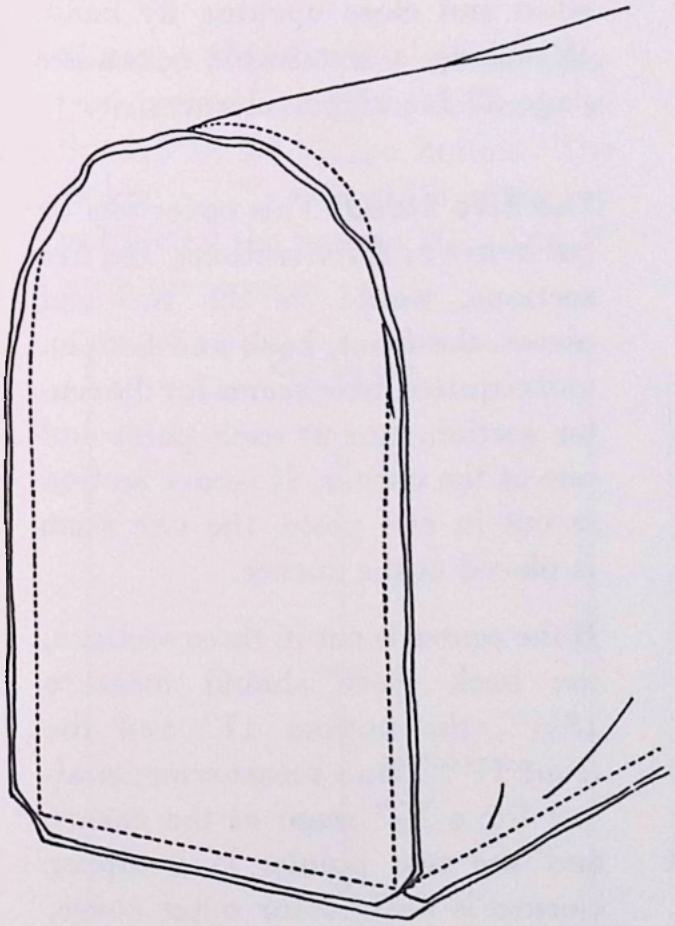


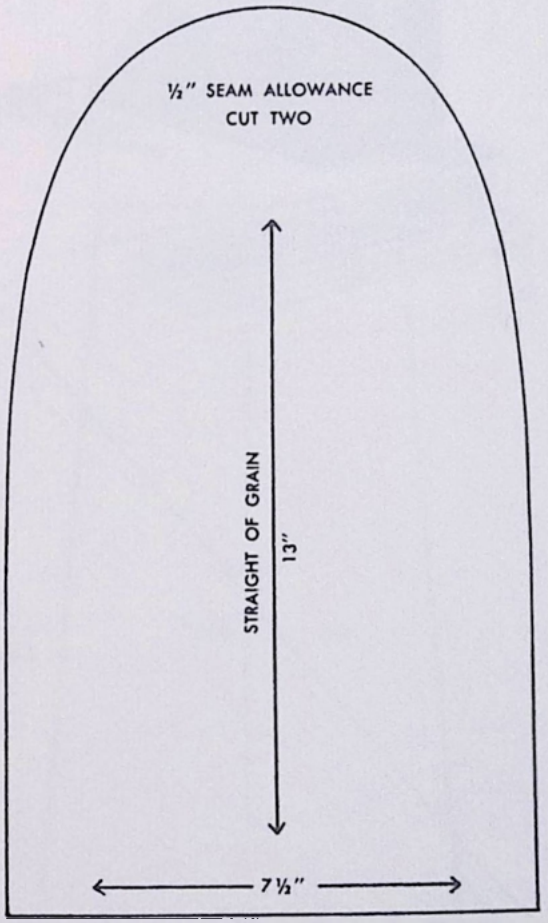


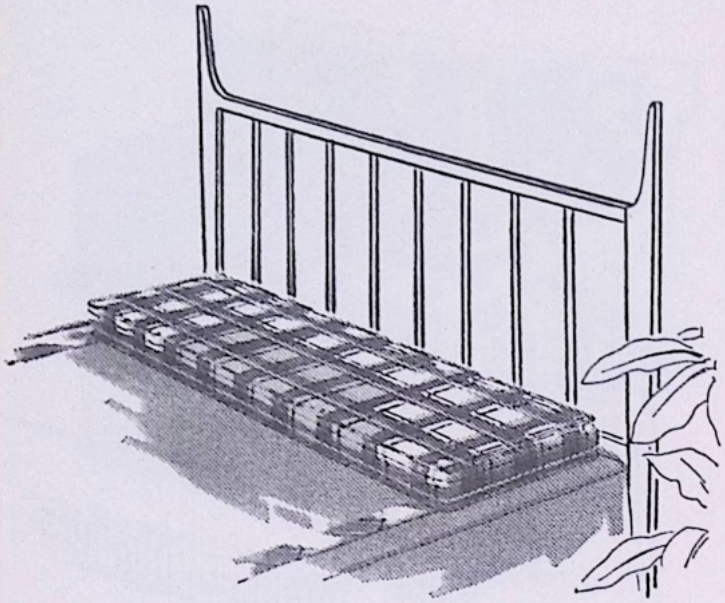
The Half Oval. The pattern for end sections measures 13″ in height by 7½″ at the base. The sides taper from base to 3¾″ in width ½″ below the top. The center section should measure the circumference of the end. In this case about 37½″. The construction is the same as for the round design.

Cut fabric for outer cover on the same grain and to the same measurements as for form.





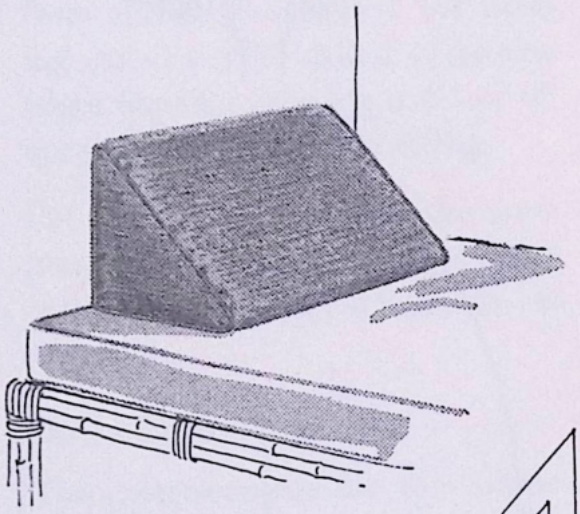




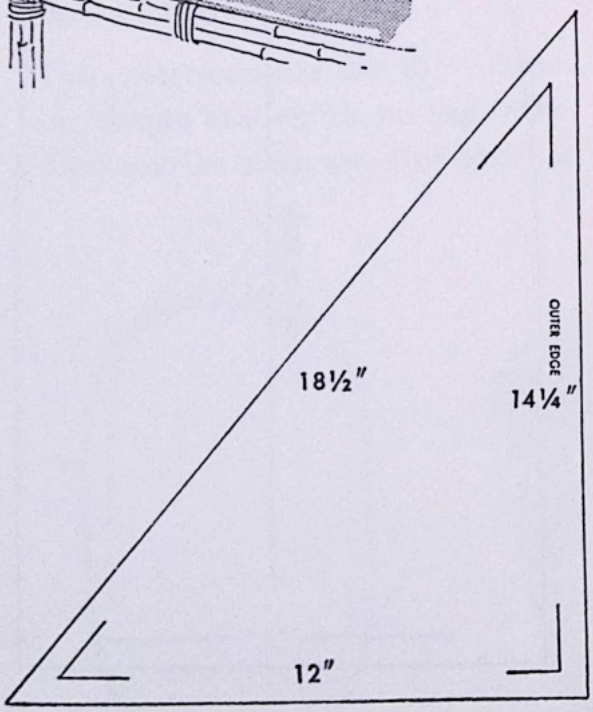
Oblong. This bolster may measure from 2″ to 4″ in depth, from 10″ to 14″ wide and as long as the width of the bed, couch, etc. or, one-half the width when using two bolsters instead of one. The construction is the same as for a box cushion.

The bolster form may be made of foam rubber, a soft filling, or, three or four layers of cellulose padding.

Finish seams of outer cover as desired and close opening by hand. If making a removable cover, see page 22 for zipper closures.



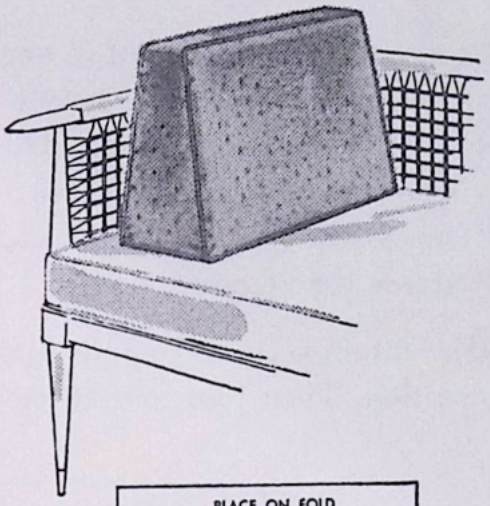
The Five Sided. This cover can be cut in five or three sections. The five sections, would be the two end pieces, the front, back and bottom, and requires three seams for the center section, one at each point and one at the corner. If center section is cut in one piece, the one seam is placed at the corner.

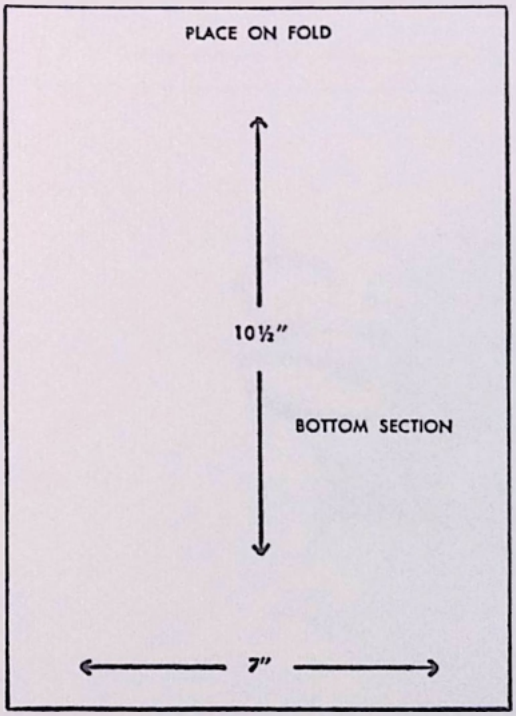


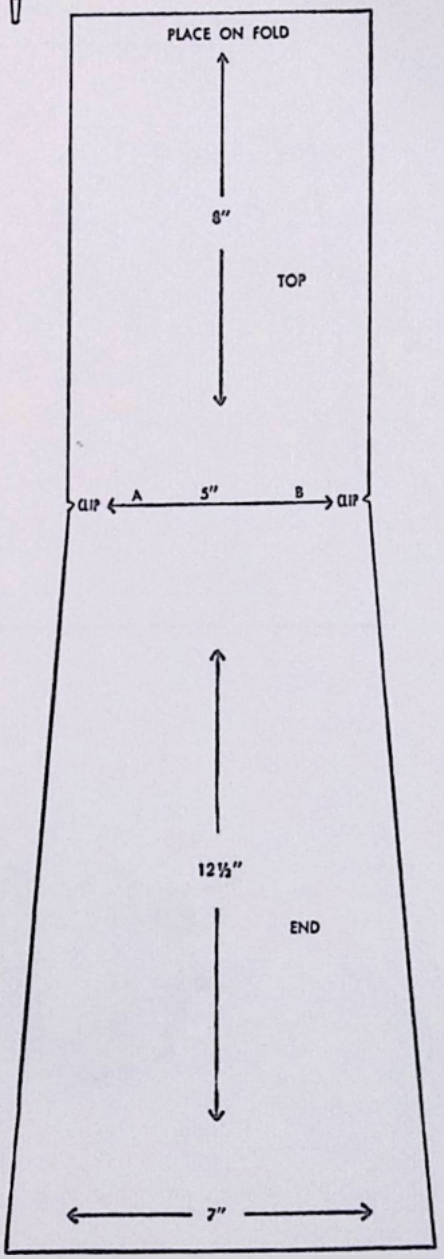
If the center is cut in three sections, the back piece should measure 13¼″, the bottom 11″ and the front 17″. These measurements allow for a ½″ seam at the corner and the two points. If a zipper closure is desired for outer cover, cut back section 13½″ and bottom 11¼″. Make a ¾″ seam at the corner. See page 22 for seam closure.

When a triangle is joined to another section make allowance for seaming at the points. It is a good idea to first measure and mark the finished length and width required. Then indicate seam allowance (½″) outside the first marking. Cut pattern on this line. Note the points extend 1⅛″ to 1½″ beyond seamline. A one piece center section, for end sections illustrated, should be cut about 39½″ wide (lengthwise) and as long (crosswise) as required.

The Six Sided. The bolster illustrated measures 4″ in thickness at the top by 6″ at the bottom. The height is 12″. The width at the top is 16″ and the bottom 20″. Add 1″ seam allowances.



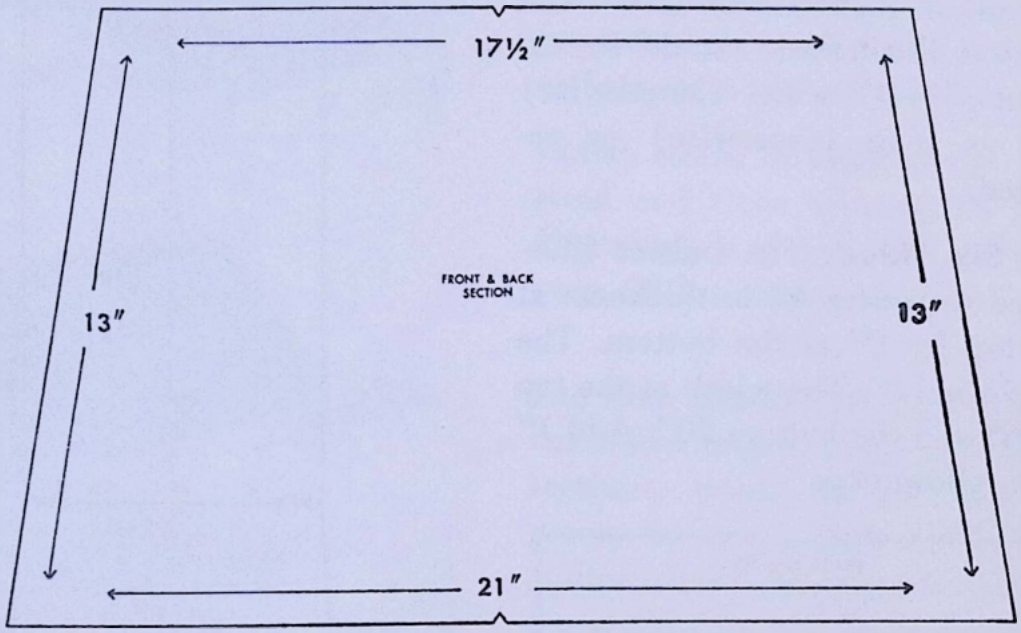


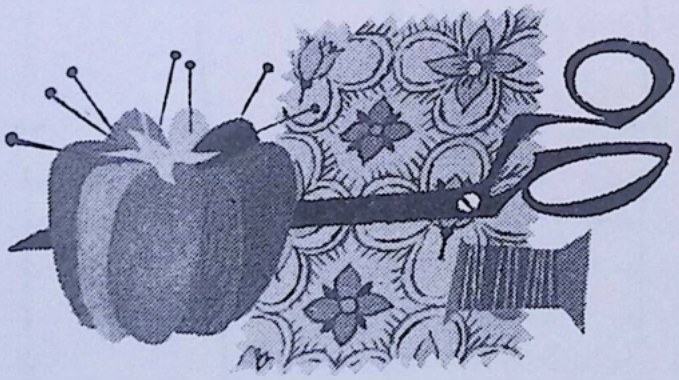


The top and ends can be cut in one piece. See illustration. Cut bottom section 7″ wide by 21″ long. The two side sections should measure 17″ across the top, 13″ high and 21″ across the bottom.

Stitch bottom sections to ends and top section. Then join to side sections. See page 7 for turning inside corners A and B. Leave an 8″ opening at the top for turning and filling.

Cut sections from fabric for outer cover to same measurements as used for form cover. Finish seams as desired.





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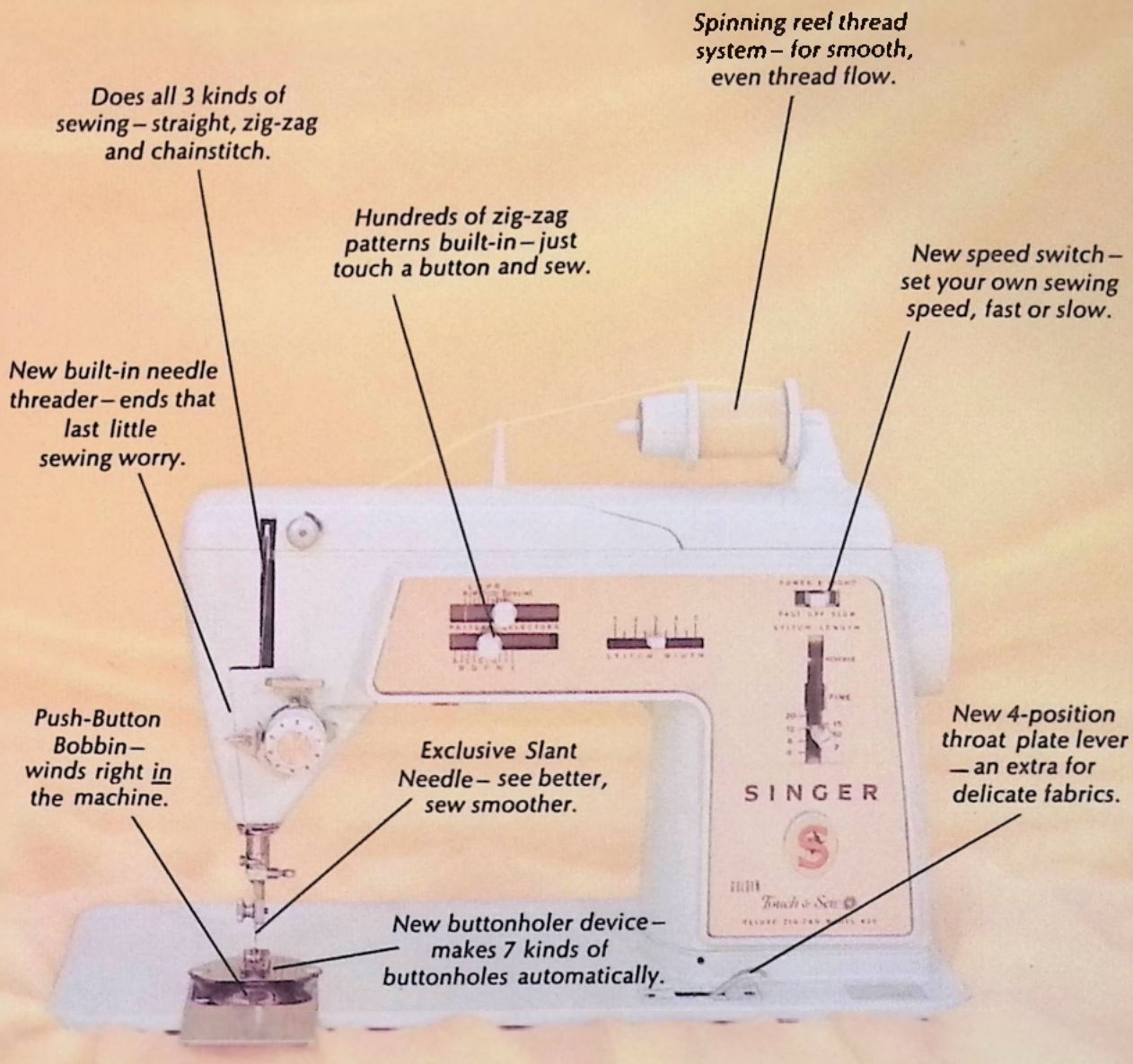
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